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Mass high court: 'Insurers can test'

*Dukakis administration regulations limiting
HIV antibody testing overturned*

By Chris Bull

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) Nov. 16 struck down state regulations restricting the insurance industry's use of HIV antibody tests. The state Consumer Affairs Division of Insurance Regulations had previously only allowed insurers to use HIV antibody tests for applicants for individual life insurance policies over \$100,000, and non-cancellable disability insurance. (HIV is a virus thought by many to be a cause of AIDS.) The state's strict confidentiality safeguards and pre- and post-test counseling requirements were also struck down. Under the SJC decision, insurers now may require tests for health, life, and disability insurance without confidentiality protections or the informed consent of the applicant.

AIDS activists slammed the decision. "This is a real blow to people who are HIV antibody positive. It makes it virtually impossible for many people to get any kind of insurance. Many must now depend on Medicaid or Medicare or impoverish themselves paying for health care," said Denise McWilliams of Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) AIDS Law Project, which helped defend the regulations before the SJC. She said the decision shifts the financial burden of AIDS from the insurance industry to government and individuals. McWilliams also said the decision opened the door to discrimination based on HIV antibody status and a host of other medical conditions.

Bill Carroll, president of the Massachusetts Life Insurance Association, applauded the decision. "We consider HIV testing to be a matter of fairness. We have to apply the same underwriting standard to all insurance holders and applicants. This decision allows us to do so. It's simply not fair to test for some diseases but not for others," said Carroll. Asked how the insurance industry plans to assist people who might be denied insurance under the SJC decision, Carroll replied, "we continue to give major donations to support research into ending this dread disease."

The SJC decision comes after a series of legal battles between the insurance industry and the Dukakis administration. In July of 1987, former State Insurance Commissioner Peter Hiam issued regulations virtually banning insurance companies' testing of applicants for HIV antibodies. But after the Massachusetts Life Insurance Association threatened to file suit, the Dukakis administration agreed to negotiate a compromise between AIDS activists and the insurance industry. The compromise agreement failed to satisfy either side. The insurance industry claimed the agreement would bankrupt them and AIDS activists said testing would inevitably lead to discrimination against those who test positive. Hiam resigned in protest over the administration's compromise regulations, which he said were not strict enough or enforceable.

The insurance industry sued the state over the watered-down regulations. The industry

won a temporary injunction from a Superior Court preventing the regulations from taking effect until the appeal process was finished. As a consequence, insurance companies were allowed to test all applicants for HIV antibodies.

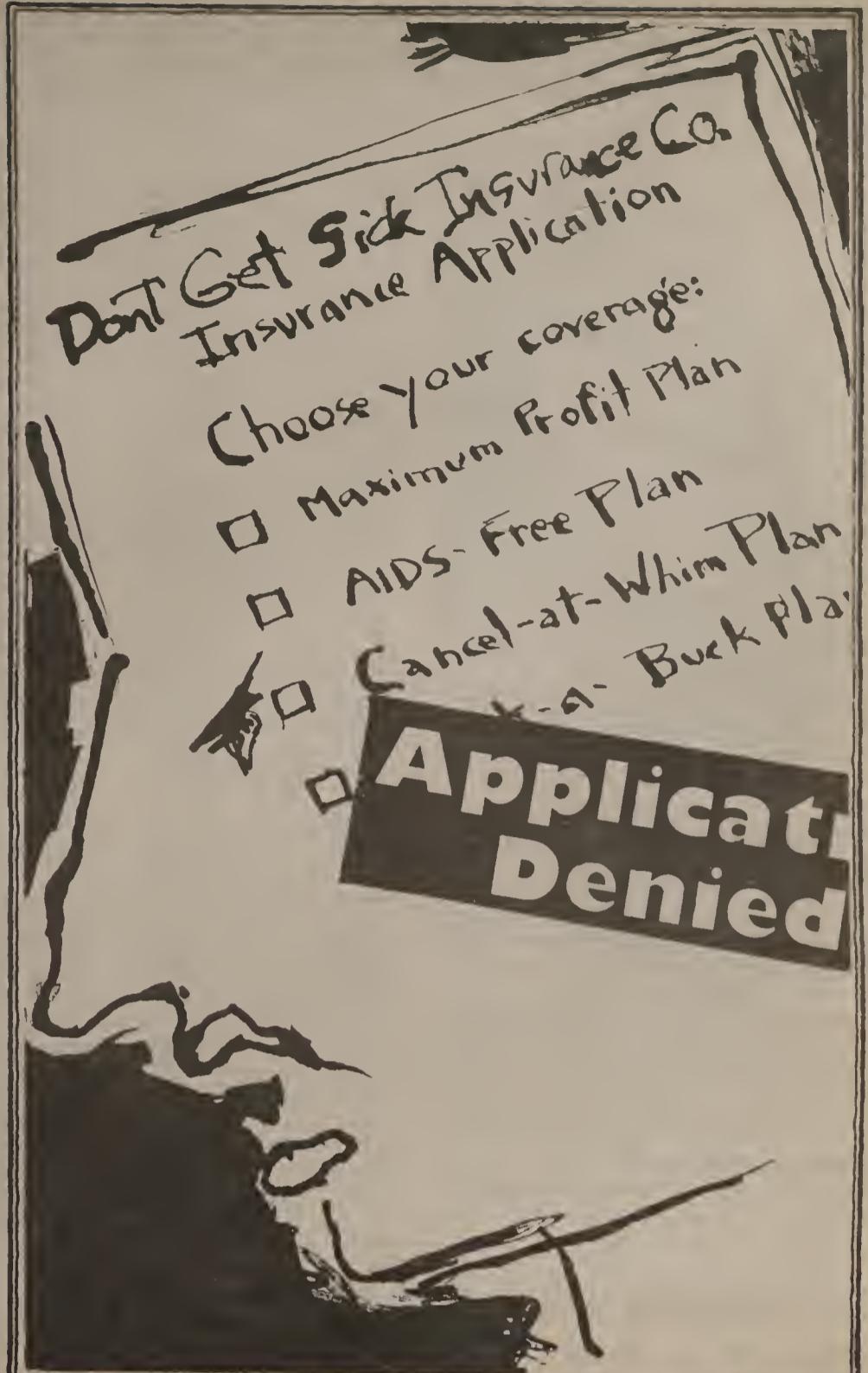
But in July of 1988, Superior Court Judge Elbert Tuttle upheld the state's policy banning testing. Tuttle said "public fear about transmission of HIV has led to violence and discrimination against those identified as HIV-positive." He pointed out that the insurance commissioner had the power to protect the health of those who test HIV antibody positive. The insurance industry then appealed the decision to the SJC, which handed down the final decision this week. The SJC decision prevents the state from imposing restrictions on insurance companies.

The SJC explained its ruling by claiming that the state insurance commissioner lacks the power to regulate the insurance industry's right to enter into contracts. "The commissioner has substantial regulatory authority over policy provisions, premium charges, and the classification of risks but he has relatively little regulatory authority over underwriting practice," said the SJC in its 13-page decision. However, the decision does indicate that the state may have some authority to demand confidentiality of HIV antibody test results and informed consent before testing is undertaken. According to the SJC, only the state legislature has the power to regulate insurance underwriting practices.

McWilliams blamed the Dukakis administration as well as the insurance industry for the ruling. "[Ever since Hiam left], the administration has been more interested in appearing to be concerned about discrimination while they were actually selling out to the insurance industry." McWilliams said the administration lost the initiative on the issue when it watered down Hiam's policy banning testing in favor of a policy more agreeable to the insurance industry. The compromise policy allowed testing in some circumstances — those applying for individual life insurance over \$100,000 and non-cancellable disability insurance. McWilliams said "By allowing any testing, the administration legitimized testing's role in underwriting decisions."

Hiam told *GCN* the administration has no one to blame but itself. "Dukakis weakened his position when he allowed any testing at all. How can you argue against testing when you actually favor testing in some cases?" He said that if the administration was really serious about protecting those who test HIV antibody positive they would have promoted legislation when the controversy first erupted rather than waiting over a year until the courts made a decision. "I think it's shameful. The administration has allowed the insurance industry to discriminate all along.... Dukakis doesn't care about AIDS and the devastating effect it is having on people. He has never taken a

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Sexperts urge more, better sex in S.F.

A report from the most recent Town Meeting on Sex and Politics

By Miranda Kolbe

SAN FRANCISCO — The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's third Town Meeting on Sex and Politics, held here Nov. 10, was an hour and a half discussion characterized more by humor and consciousness raising than political strategy or legislative updates. In this era of the "new monogamy," the "new celibacy," and perhaps, the "new repressiveness," the Town Meeting was refreshingly open and positive about sex, promiscuity, and desire in the '80s.

About 150 people attended this 8-member panel discussion and many of the audience members participated throughout the evening. At the discussion's opening, moderator David Lamble, a commentator on KQED radio, said he had hoped to create a "kind of Geraldo format," but he made sure to bolt down the chairs before the event. The panel was comprised of *On Our Backs* editor Susie Bright; John Rowberry, author of *Gay Video* and editor of *Studflix*; civil rights attorney Roberta Achtenberg; *Outlook* editor Jeff Escoffier; Tim Kingston, a reporter for *Coming Up*; and two former *GCN* staffers and present NGLTF staff members, Sue Hyde and Urvashi Vaid.

The topics discussed through the evening ranged from pornography to age of consent laws to family legislation and commercialization of sexuality. If there was an underlying agenda for the event, it might have been that while all consensual sex is good, more sex is better. There were no advocates for celibacy in the crowd, nor monogamy, nor non-genital-focused sex, or at least none that spoke out their beliefs. Sexual abuse issues were all but absent from the discussion. Instead, what was heard over and over was frustration at not getting enough, and desire to have more.

In some respects, the discussion could have been split into two — one for the women and one for the men. As one au-

dience member commented, "Lesbian sexuality has been pretty much seen as nonexistent, and gay men have been seen as all sex for a long time. They're two different dynamics with their own histories. They're not really in juxtaposition with each other, they're just two separate dynamics."

The desire to simply have more sex more often was a commonly spoken theme among the lesbians, both on the panel and in the audience. Urvashi Vaid commented that when she worked at *GCN*, gay men's sex lives



Susie Bright, editor of *On Our Backs*, were a point of jealousy for her. "All these guys after meetings — these endless horrible meetings where we'd be fighting our heads off — would go out to the Fenway. Where did we [women] go? Home."

Susie Bright said that in the '70s there was very little discussion about sex among lesbians. Change has come about in the '80s,

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Elaine Noble

Quote of the week

"When the Massachusetts legislature voted to prohibit lesbians and gay couples from adopting children or becoming foster parents, Mike Dukakis vetoed the bill."

— *Elaine Noble, in an opinion piece in the Front Page, a North Carolina gay paper, in which she urged readers to vote for Dukakis for president. Noble, a lesbian who campaigned for Dukakis, failed to explain to North Carolinians that the model for the bill Dukakis vetoed came from the governor's own policy, and that he signed that policy into the Massachusetts budget earlier this year.*

Antibody positive dental student gets boot

ST. LOUIS — A dental student who tested positive for HIV antibodies was expelled from the Washington University Dental School. The student was expelled after the Student's Health Service illegally released the student's medical records to the school's administration.

In addition, the school has contacted and offered free HIV antibody testing to all 27 patients on whom the student had performed "invasive procedures," according to the *Montrose Voice*. Although the American Dental Association and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have identified no risk of transmission from health care provider to patient, according to the *Voice*, the dental school dean David A. Bensinger decided the risk was high enough to warrant the action.

□ Alan Freedman

Steam rises in bathhouse debate

LOS ANGELES — The fate of the Los Angeles bathhouse Mac's recently divided gay and AIDS movement leaders, as the battle for freedom of association crashed headlong into a public health/AIDS prevention agenda calling for closure of this L.A. meeting place. Although a court ruled Aug. 30 to close the facility, the priorities of the organized gay community on the questions involved in the case remain unclear.

The arguments are familiar. Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, in a brief filed on behalf of Mac's, noted the role bathhouses play in reaching "whole groups of men who are impossible to educate any other way — bisexuals, closeted gay men, and men who don't identify as gay but have sex with other men." Lambda executive director Tom Stoddard stressed that "there is no scientific basis whatsoever" that bathhouses stimulate unsafe sexual activity, that such claims are based "on perceived political exigencies rather than on fact or data," according to the *Montrose Voice*.

Outspoken on the opposite side of the issue is author Randy Shilts, who branded bathhouses an "anachronism" now that the gay community is "finding a higher level of personal liberation." Further, Shilts characterized continued bathhouse advocacy

by any "responsible" gay organization as "appalling and nauseating." As Shilts explained, "Arguing that bathhouses don't spread AIDS — and in fact help stop the spread of AIDS — is like arguing that day is night. How anybody who has ever been to a bathhouse can say such things with a straight face just blows me away." Supporting Shilts' statement are allegations made by undercover investigators in the Mac's case that in six visits to the bathhouse they witnessed "ten corroborated and 15 uncorroborated acts of unprotected anal intercourse."

John Davidson of the ACLU, which also represented Mac's, disagreed with Shilts' argument and criticized gay leaders who he said are willing to "sacrifice the bathhouses to straight opinion."

□ Alan Freedman

Justice to conduct hate crimes follow-up report

WASHINGTON — "Hate violence" — crimes motivated by the race, sexual orientation or ethnicity of the victim — will be the focus of a comprehensive "Issues and Practices" study to be conducted by the National Institute of Justice. After a full year of lobbying by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and other groups, support for this project has finally been secured through an appropriations bill signed into law by President Reagan Oct. 1. The bill, in language tailored by recently unseated Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.), designates "sufficient funds" to the NIJ — the research division of the Justice Department — to "highlight existing programs to combat hate crimes and provide guidelines for criminal justice agencies to (1) identify, classify, investigate and prosecute hate crimes, (2) encourage reporting by hate crime victims, and (3) improve the treatment of hate crime victims."

The planned study will build on an exploratory study of hate crimes completed by NIJ in October, 1987, which concluded that "homosexuals are probably the most frequent victims" of hate violence. As an "Issues and Practices" project, the new



Kevin Berrill

study will offer a more practical, in-depth examination of hate violence as it affects law enforcement and criminal justice practitioners. It is expected to cost as much as, or more than, \$100,000.

Kevin Berrill, Director of NGLTF's Anti-Violence Project, credited Weicker and the more than 70 members of Congress who helped persuade the Justice Department to conduct this follow-up study. Berrill said he is hopeful that the project will "significantly improve the law enforcement response to bias-motivated attacks against lesbian and gay people and other minority groups."

□ Alan Freedman

Slides sought for Bridges

BOSTON — Slides are being sought of people with AIDS and ARC, alive or departed, to be included as part of a non-sectarian healing celebration called Bridges to be held Dec. 18 at Faneuil Hall.

The event, sponsored by the AIDS Action Committee, will be "a time for remembrance and renewal for all whose lives have

been touched by AIDS. Bridges is held during the holiday season, when many of us feel our losses more acutely. At this time, we ask you to participate in this celebration of renewal, to acknowledge our losses, and to gather our strength to carry on."

Slides can be of yourself, or yourself with others, or of loved ones. No slides will be returned. Be sure to obtain permission from anyone pictured in your slides. As many slides received as possible will be included in the program. Please send slides by Dec. 2 to Bridges, c/o AAC, 131 Clarendon St., Boston, MA 02116.

□ Jennie McKnight

22 gay Tasmanians arrested

HOBART, Australia — The Hobart City Council banned an information booth run by the Tasmanian Gay Law Reform Group in an effort to distribute information about Tasmanian laws preventing sex between consenting males. The decision in late September has resulted in the arrests of 22 members of the group who were either staffing the stall or attending the Saturday Dalamanca Market, where the booth is located. The penalty for those convicted under the law is up to 21 years in jail.

In addition to distributing information, the group also used the stall to gather signatures for a petition calling for the abolition of the two particular criminal sections banning gay sex. Members of the group had managed to collect 1000 signatures until their arrests.

The group had continued to staff the booth after the ban had been imposed because the group and its supporters, who included a number of other stall-holders, claimed the ban was unjust. The Hobart City Council had also refused to negotiate with them about the booth. During the fracas that took place when the first nine members were arrested, onlookers were extremely vocal in protest against the arrests. In a display of support for the members who were arrested, 100 extra signatures were immediately added to the petition.

A letter-writing campaign has begun to protest the arrests of the Hobart Gay 22 and the homophobic Tasmania laws. Write to the Lord Mayor of Hobart, Hobart, Tasmania, and send a copy to the Tasmanian Premier in Hobart.

□ Kendall Lovett

Boston gaybashers get more than wrist slap

BOSTON — Municipal Court Judge Herbert Herschfang Nov. 10 sentenced Thomas Ryan and David Hanoian to 30 days in prison and 23 months of probation for assault and battery against Jim Branning, a resident of Boston's South End. Katherine Triantafillou, Branning's lawyer, told *GCN* that the judge handed down a more serious sentence than most assault and battery cases entail based on the violation of Branning's civil rights as a gay man. The Massachusetts Civil Rights Statute, which calls for additional penalties for crimes based on ethnic and religious bias, has been interpreted by attorney general James Shannon to include sexual orientation. Lawyers for the defendants said they would appeal the sentence and ask for a jury trial.

Branning testified that on April 9th he was walking on Huntington Avenue when Ryan and Hanoian began calling him "faggot" and threatening to beat him up. When Branning asked the defendants to leave him alone, they jumped him, punching him repeatedly in the face. Branning received multiple wounds and a broken nose.

Branning told *GCN* he might not have survived the attack without the assistance of several people in the area. According to Branning, Ryan, 19, and Hanoian, 18, threatened to "finish you off" when he tried to block their escape in an automobile. Branning said he managed to see the license number of the car and repeat it to several witnesses as the car sped off.

The district attorney in the case, Joe Murray, asked for two years in prison without probation. Lawyers for Ryan and Hanoian, citing their youth, asked for a continuance without a finding for two years. A continuance would have placed the defendants

on two year's probation. After two years with no further arrests, the assault and battery conviction would have been deleted from their records.

Branning said the judge was sending a message to the defendants and gay-bashers everywhere by sentencing them to prison. "Of course it's all relative. Ideally they would serve more time. But given the wrist slaps most gay-bashers receive this is a real victory," he said. Triantafillou and Branning argued that hate-inspired violence is on the upswing in this country and that youth is not an excuse for such a serious crime.

In his victim impact statement delivered to the court on Nov. 10, Branning said: "... there is a disturbing growth of hate crimes in this country by young men in their late teens and early twenties: the young man who killed a stranded Black motorist in Howard Beach; the young man who recently destroyed the Holy Torah scrolls in a New York synagogue; and the attack of two gay men recently in New York's Upper West Side and the stabbing of one by two young men indicate the seriousness of this phenomenon."

□ Chris Bull

We are everywhere: the pansy from Planet X

PITALITO, Colombia — A stunned farmer came face-to-face with a gay alien from Pluto, reports the *Weekly World News*, a sensationalistic supermarket tabloid. According to a news item in the *Front Page*, the tabloid reported that Hector Bria was visited in his mountain home by "a seven-foot-tall sissy from outer space." The alien tried to romance Bria, and "when he spurred the space sissy's advances, the creature burst into tears."

The story goes that Bria reported this creature to the Colombia Defense Department, explaining that it had pale green skin,



Anne Strasburg

huge eyes, and a large mouth. He wore thick makeup, a silver jumpsuit, and red striped tights. "His limbs were thin and rubbery," said the farmer.

The tabloid reported that "the cosmic queen sashayed around [Bria's] home, trying on his wife's jewelry and high heels. Using telepathy, the creature told Bria about his long lonely days and nights aboard the spaceship. Finally, the intergalactic gay [alien] approached Bria, grabbed him and kissed him passionately on the neck."

"I pushed him away, and he started to cry," Bria said. Then "he flounced out the door... The guy was a fairy and nutty as a fruitcake. I hope he never comes back. I won't tolerate pansies of any kind — not even green pansies from Pluto."

□ Dan Verfaille

Gay priest excommunicated

MINNEAPOLIS — William Dorn, Jr., who was suspended from the Roman Catholic priesthood after disclosing that he was gay, has been banned from the priesthood forever and officially excommunicated, according to the *New York Times*.

A church tribunal found Dorn guilty of leaving the Catholic Church and joining the Episcopal Church. The ruling puts an end to a two-year public dispute in which Dorn and the church clashed over the priest's outspoken challenges to Catholic teachings on homosexuality.

The former bishop of St. Cloud, Minnesota, George Speltz, dismissed Dorn from his job at the Christ Church Newman Center at St. Cloud State University in October 1986 after he wrote a newspaper article advocating a more compassionate view of homosexuality. Dorn was suspended from the priesthood a few weeks later.

□ Don Verfaille

ACT UP/NY trial postponed

Fifteen of all 111 arrested at civil disobedience on Wall Street still face charges

By Andrew Miller

NEW YORK — What was to have been the beginning of ACT UP/New York's first court trial ended anti-climactically Nov. 14 when the district attorney's office was granted a three-week adjournment in the case. The trial's origins date back to ACT UP's demonstration on Wall Street March 24, at which 111 people were arrested.

Charges of disorderly conduct and resisting arrest remain against 15 of the original 111 people who participated in civil disobedience that day by blocking traffic in New York's Financial District. These 15 were involved in subsequent arrests at other ACT UP demonstrations, prior to their arraignment on the Wall Street charges. According to a spokesperson for the DA's office, the defendants have been offered ACD's at least a half a dozen times, but have refused them. An ACD, or adjournment in contemplation of dismissal, would

allow the charges to be dropped after a prescribed period of time, usually six months. If the defendant is re-arrested during that period, however, the charges are automatically reinstated. The DA's office has refused an unconditional dismissal of the original charges, even though some charges from the subsequent arrests were, in fact, dropped.

Anticipating the possibility of a lengthier day in court, the 15 defendants and an equal number of supporters packed into a tiny courtroom in the Criminal Court House of the City of New York at 100 Centre Street. Most of the ACT UP members identified themselves by wearing Silence = Death t-shirts.

The presiding judge, Justice Laura Drager, was clearly annoyed with the prosecution's attempt to again delay what has already been a drawn-out judicial process. The attorney representing the district attorney's office asked for extra time to talk with the various police officers involved with the arrests, in order to determine the viability of continuing with the prosecution. Observers agreed that such a request is tantamount to an admission that as yet very little thought has gone into the prosecution's strategy.

Bill Dobbs and John Zirinsky, the ACT UP attorneys representing the 15, told the judge that they were ready to go to trial immediately. The four assistant district attorneys actually assigned to the case were not present in the courtroom, and the motion to adjourn was handled by another

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Time running out for Mass. gay rights bill

Supporters looking to '89

By Judy Harris

BOSTON — After most legislators had gone home for the evening, more than 50 lesbian/gay activists staged a State House-front rally Nov. 14 in support of the state gay civil rights bill. Once again this legislation, which gay rights supporters have pushed for 16 years, may be stalled to death. Though a majority of the legislators have endorsed the bill, opponents may defeat it by using legislative delay tactics.

Lesbian and gay activists told *GCN* they are worried that delays in the Senate — which has been closed for debate since before the Nov. 8 elections — will prevent a final vote on the bill before the end of the legislative session. The bill has yet to be released to the Committee of Bills in the Third Reading where it can stay for 45 days. If it does not enter the Committee for the Third Reading before Nov. 18, it can be held until Jan. 3 when the legislature adjourns.

Sen. Arthur Lewis (D-Jamaica Plain), chair of the Committee for the Third Reading Committee, has indicated on a number of occasions that he will hold the bill in his committee to prevent it from passing. Lewis successfully employed this tactic last year and the bill died in his committee, even though the function of the committee is only to check that the bill is written in accordance with Senate rules.

"Parliamentary procedures are a last-ditch effort of a minority to keep it from passing," said openly gay Boston City Councillor David Sondras, who spoke at the rally.

The Massachusetts Gay Civil Rights Bill (S. 47) would ban discrimination in housing, employment, and access to public accommodations based on one's sexual orientation. If the bill passes, Massachusetts would join Wisconsin to become one of two states

in the country to legislate gay civil rights. The bill's long and troubled past was barely mentioned during the rally, and speakers did not explicitly delineate their tactics for the next few critical days.

Peter Bookheimer, a member of MASS ACT OUT and an organizer of the rally, ex-



Boston City Councillor David Sondras

plained that "because the bill hasn't officially been screwed yet," supporters agreed to rally focusing on the merits of the bill rather than its likely demise.

Many of the speakers emphasized that lesbian and gay civil rights are supported by "mainstream" Massachusetts voters. In addition to Sondras, speakers included other

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'AIDS breeding ground' shut by NY health dept.

AIDS educators decry closing of gay porn theater

By Chris Bull

NEW YORK — For the first time since 1985 when the Mineshaft, New St. Mark's Baths and Plato's Retreat were closed, the city's Department of Health shut down a gay-related sex establishment for allegedly allowing its customers to engage in unsafe sex. Lesbian/gay activists and AIDS educators blasted the Oct. 1 closing of Cinema 14, a gay male porn theater, as a homophobic attack based more on AIDS hysteria than public health concerns. Activists said the closing would hamper educational efforts and lead to further government crackdowns on gay bathhouses, sex clubs and porn theaters.

"There is no justification for closing Cinema 14 or any other sex business," said Mickey Wheatley, staff attorney for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. "It's simply a case of government officials trying to appear to be doing something about AIDS while they are failing to provide proper educational outreach. It's official gay bashing." He said sex establishments are in fact the best places to educate people about safer sex techniques.

Health Department representatives and New York police entered Cinema 14, located on Third Avenue and 14th Street in the East Village, escorted customers out and padlocked the building. According to the Department of Health, the theater was shut down under an ordinance that permits the city to close for one year any business that is deemed to be a threat to public health.

Marvin Bogner, assistant city health commissioner, told *GCN* that city investigators believe Cinema 14 was one of the few city businesses that continued to allow customers to engage in "anal intercourse without a condom." Health Commissioner Stephen Joseph called Cinema 14 an "AIDS breeding ground," in a legal brief.

Bogner said city investigators witnessed "nearly 100" acts of unsafe sex over a three-month period and that the theater's management ignored warnings in December of 1987 and June of 1988 before the city closed it down. "We had no recourse," said Bogner. "We have been trying to work with the theater's management for years. They consistently refused to monitor activity or to seek help eliminating unsafe sex on the premises." The Mahalira Theater Corporation, which owns Cinema 14, could not be reached for comment.

But David Winter, coordinator of AIDS prevention for Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), blasted the Health Department for closing Cinema 14. "It's a barbaric ac-

tion stemming from their homophobia and stereotypes about public sex. It's vindictive and based more on a desire to punish people than educate them." He said that the Health Department spends more resources investigating reports of unsafe sexual practices than it does educating people who engage in high-risk behavior. He said no attempts were made to bring GMHC or other community-based AIDS organizations in to help educate the customers of Cinema 14. "The Health Department has simply made our job more difficult by dispersing people into the parks and other parts of the city where they are more difficult for us to reach," said Winter. He added that there are dozens of heterosexual porn theaters in Times Square that the city has not touched.

Bogner claimed that the theater management consistently refused educational materials the Department of Health made available. He said the city provides GMHC with over \$500,000 per year to do AIDS education at establishments such as Cinema 14. "GMHC can't have it both ways. They can't criticize us for shutting down the theater when they are failing to stop high-risk behaviors." Winter angrily rebutted Bogner, saying GMHC cannot possibly reach everyone engaging in high-risk sex in the city with its limited resources. And Laurie Behrman, spokesperson for GMHC, said porn theaters should only be closed as a last resort and that the city failed to involve community-based groups such as GMHC in the decision.

Doron Gopstein, attorney for the city in the case, said the city prefers to have establishments reduce high-risk behavior than to close them. "We are scrupulously careful to have solid evidence to uphold our case. It is possible to run a gay porn theater or bathhouse in New York as long as they are operated legally. After all, there are plenty of them still in existence," said Gopstein.

Winter cited two recent studies to back up his position that sex establishments should not be shut down. One study, by the San Francisco Department of Health, indicated that the rate of new incidence of HIV infection among gay men in San Francisco is down to nearly zero. [Joseph used the same study to justify slashing by half the city's estimate of HIV prevalence in New York. ACT UP/New York accused Joseph of fashioning statistics to match the city's budget for AIDS. (See *GCN*, Aug. 7, 1988)] According to Winter, the study's findings

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Sexperts

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she said, in part as a need to finally confront issues that were skirted around in previous years. "The same women who were burning down porn stores a few years ago are the same ones who put out *Bad Attitude* and *On Our Backs* and *Outrageous Women* and all the rest."

"In the '70s," Bright said, "the only media that talked about lesbians was the lesbian feminist media, and the only things they ever talked about were how we were — oh, you know, knitting things for South Africa and so on. They didn't talk about lesbians fucking. They didn't talk about lesbians shooting up. They didn't talk about lesbians having fights with their families about this, that and the other thing. There's this whole panorama of lesbian life that we've never discussed, so now we're stuck with this *Well of Loneliness* idea that lesbians don't have sex; certainly they wouldn't do drugs; they don't do the kinds of things that would get them in trouble, because they're just these suffering, noble, weird women."

Women in the audience and on the panel dispelled at least some of the myths through the evening, with occasional frank references to changes they have experienced in their own sex lives over the past few years. One woman mentioned that she had used a dental dam going down on her lover a few days ago, because her lover had had a yeast infection and she didn't want to catch it. Vaid said, "I'm seeing the end of a lot of long-term relationships, and the emergence of women having several simultaneous sexual relationships. If they have a primary emotional relationship, they're still fucking around with three girls on the side."

For the men who spoke at the event, AIDS has clearly brought on the most dramatic changes in their sex lives and attitudes towards sex. John Rowberry said, "We had this great shut down on sex when AIDS first came at the beginning. All sex was bad, all sex could make you sick, all sex would kill you. So people either said, 'What the fuck, I'm going to die anyway,' or they stopped having sex entirely, or they got married suddenly." While the extreme behaviors characteristic of most gay men at the beginning of the epidemic may no longer be typical due to safer-sex information, several men said they believed the emotions around

gay male sex have been irrevocably changed. "I have as much sex now as I ever had," one audience member commented. "I have safe sex. I'm promiscuous. I pick up guys in the Castro. I feel fine about this and can do it in a healthy way. What I find dangerous in the community, and what frankly saddens me, is that we in the gay male community have not only quietly accepted shame back



Urvashi Vaid

in, but part of us is embracing it and allowing it to reign."

Moderator David Lamble commented that he often feels afraid when he encounters someone on the street these days who is a potential sex partner. The element of fear, he believes, is partly justified by rising statistics of anti-gay violence in this city.

Most of the male members of the audience said they were having less sex these days, and that casual or anonymous sex was harder to come by. Daniel Curzon noted, "I have an eight-year relationship, and as I say that, I realize I'm sort of bragging. I'm very aware of the brag quotient coming in. We point out, I have a long-term relationship and therefore I'm a better person." Curzon added, "I have a feeling we're going to go through a lot more of that almost neo-Victorian attitude." □

COMMUNITY VOICES

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"Community Voices" and "Speaking Out" are parts of our efforts to provide a true forum of opinion for the community. We encourage you to send your ideas, feelings and comments to us, and to respond to ideas expressed in this space. We welcome all contributions except personal attacks. Copies of letters and "Speaking Out" contributions sent elsewhere are printed on a space-available basis. GCN reserves the right to edit letters and "Speaking Out" contributions for length and clarity, in consultation with the author. The opinions expressed are those of the author and are not intended to represent the views of the GCN membership.

Letter and "Speaking Out" contributions must be TYPED and DOUBLE-SPACED. Letters can be NO LONGER THAN TWO PAGES. "Speaking Out" contributions can be NO LONGER THAN FOUR PAGES. Send to: Community Voices or Speaking Out, GCN, 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116.

Who should GCN try to reach?

Dear GCN:

I was glad to read (in GCN's *Community Voices*, Oct. 9-15) that Chris Wittke generally appreciates the way I express my ideas even though he doesn't always agree with them. I'd like to respond to some valid points he raised in his letter, clarify some points I think he misread, and express some fundamental disagreement.

First of all, Chris took issue with my suggestion that someone who considers AIDS "silly" should be sent to a reeducation camp. Point taken: I didn't mean this literally, but I think Chris is absolutely right that the image of camps evokes terrible associations and isn't something to joke about.

Chris's more substantive concern, as I read him, was that my letter somehow epitomized an attitude that bothers him, i.e., that I and nameless others connected with GCN are ready to write off anyone who doesn't toe a particular political line, thus not only depriving GCN of needed subscription revenues but also missing opportunities to influence people.

In fact, I did suggest that it would be no great loss to GCN if a couple of specific readers (e.g., Jennifer AIDS-is-Silly Santini and Dan GCN-Oppresses-Affluent-White-Men Mishkind) should decide to take a walk. Of course, regardless of my opinion, these two readers and others (including myself and Chris Wittke) are always free to either continue to read a paper that sometimes enrages us or to decide not to. It's been my experience that, to its credit, sooner or later GCN manages to enrage everyone. Amid the homogenized homo rags of the late '80s, I'm glad one paper still has enough spunk to keep its readers awake and talking back. Such spunk is as likely to attract readers as send them packing, and Chris provides no evidence for his contention that such contentiousness — mine, his, or anybody else's — is the cause of the monetary problems GCN faces.

GCN has always been a somewhat uncomfortable coalition of people who consider themselves radicals and people who consider themselves "reasonable," "balanced," "fair-minded," "open-minded," etc. (I'd call them good old-fashioned liberals, though some of them consider themselves above politics. Their "line" — which they see as the reasonable and fair line to follow — is that they don't have a line.) For years people in the "reasonable," let's-be-nice camp have argued the same line Chris argues now: that potential readers, subscribers and advertisers are being scared off by a leftist, pro-feminist, anti-racist bias in GCN's pages. Others (and you can guess my own bias by the way I phrase this) think that making GCN a mouthpiece for a more conservative politic (with the implicit racism, class oppression and misogyny that go with that) would serve (and has served) to push out a lot of other potential readers — readers who aren't affluent, aren't white, aren't male and don't care to read about a movement that doesn't apply to them and that continually insults and ignores them — potential readers who, by and large, are not involved in the gay and lesbian movement because it is dominated by white, affluent men and their agendas. In my opinion, it is these potential readers (and more importantly, potential activists) GCN should be working to reach.

I'm not claiming to have the last word on how to go about that (though personal, valuable pieces about homeless women of color with AIDS, such as the one Liz Galst wrote,

and pieces about grassroots art and politics would strike me as more effective than, say, reviews of opera or mainstream theater that most of us couldn't afford to attend if we wanted to). I'm only saying that I'd rather be discussing that particular how-to than talking about, e.g., how to spoonfeed politics to some spoiled white male Republican condo-dweller who happens to be gay. (Many affluent white male condo-dwellers are true and genuine allies to the rest of us. They're not asking for spoonfeeding. The rest of them be damned. I'm sorry if this attitude makes Chris Wittke shudder, but I do believe that there are some gay people who are not on the same side as I am and never will be.)

There's no question that GCN needs to reach a wider readership in order to survive and thrive. The tremendous strides it took in the late '70s in covering women's issues certainly increased its circulation among lesbians; I hope the very noticeable steps it has taken in the last few years toward broadening its coverage of issues of concern to gay men and lesbians of color have led to significant increases in readership by queers of color. When united, the various "minority" stripes of the rainbow add up to the great majority of queers as well as of heterosexuals. That's a potentially enormous subscription base and a huge potential source of other revenue. Maybe GCN can figure out how to tap it better — in fact, GCN has to figure out how to tap it better if it is to survive financially — though it can't do it without alienating a few people who have some privilege they're not prepared to give up. But since when have gay liberationists been so concerned about offending people and threatening the status quo?

All things considered, GCN's staff continues to put out a lively, informative, offensive, threatening newspaper. Hats off to them for that, and I hope the current financial crisis will pass so they can get on with their valuable work.

In solidarity,
Pam Mitchell
Cambridge, Mass.

Sex is the ugliest word

Dear GCN:

Arizona has been fishing for a long time to raise public opinion high enough to bring in forced AIDS testing. This is a pro-right wing state that would prefer to build a wall around it and make everyone that comes in a prisoner until they prove they are financially acceptable to live here. The police and prisons have the biggest budgets in all the state. Prosecuting lawyers outnumber defense lawyers nearly 3 to 1 at last count.

Sex is the ugliest word in the English language here. I do not wish to sound prejudicial but the most powerful force is the Mormon church. They are very evident in every law that is passed and are anti-sexual no matter what the preference may be.

This prison has grown from a population of 3,000 in 1980 to well over 20,000 recently. The legislators brag about curbing 'sexual perversion' by sending them all to prison, yet they never mention who owns all those peepshows and pornography stores, who gets those profits, and how much faster you go to prison if you're not a Mormon.

I have to wonder who owns the clinics that would do the mandatory testing that they are trying to pass a law about now.

This may be the land of cactus and poverty struck Indians, but it is also a very cunning financial entity with cruelty on its mind.

Respectfully,
Joe Engle
PO Box 629-41692
Florence, AZ 85232

Athletes flexing muscles

Dear GCN:

"Be the best you can be.... Replace sports fear with sports fun.... Just by participating each individual becomes a winner.... A demonstration of the diversity, strength and health of our community."

The words and spirit of Dr. Tom Waddell's vision were alive and well at "2 for the Show," the planning conference for Celebration '90, which I attended over the Columbus Day Weekend. The think-tank of 50-plus delegates from the U.S., Canada and France bristled with spiritual energy. I commend the Vancouver organizers for the solid foundation that they have established for their community's gays and lesbians, and for their receptiveness to outside ideas and criticism.

Brief list of conference topics:

Gay Community News is produced by a collective dedicated to providing coverage of events and news in the interest of gay and lesbian liberation. The collective consists of a paid staff of ten, a general membership of volunteers, and a board of directors elected by the membership.

Opinions reflected in "editorials" represent the views of the paid staff collective. Signed letters and columns represent the views and opinions of the authors only. We encourage all readers to send us comments, criticism, and information, and to volunteer and become members.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to: **Gay Community News**, 62 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116.

In 1973, GCN was there covering the budding lesbian/gay movement.



Last year, GCN was there when we marched on Washington.

This year, GCN is there as we ACT NOW & come out in pride & defiance.

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Mail to: GCN Subscriptions, 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116

1. The cultural events of Celebration '90 will be of equal importance to the athletic events; proposals for cultural events are welcome, address below.

2. Sport registration begins July 1, 1989; final information about each event will be available in June of 1989.

3. Housing information (billetting) will be available; information will accompany registration materials.

4. An estimated 7,000 people will attend Celebration '90 from the 25 cities represented at "2 for the Show;" outreach is still important. Spreading the word of this event must be local, national and international.

5. The Vancouver organizers need our help. Please become a member of the organization by sending \$10 and your name and address to: *Celebration '90*, 1170 Bute St., Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6E 1Z6. The greater number of memberships they have, the greater leverage they have in obtaining local facilities and funds.

On Monday, October 17th, the dormant Boston Sports Committee awoke. Outreach and fundraising committees, and a sports contact list and mailing list were organized. We will be reaching into the niches to bring out gays and lesbians who would normally be overlooked; Boston and New England's athletes and artists at Celebration '90 will truly represent the diversity of our community. Recognizing the costs of an event like this — training facilities, uniforms, administration, registration, travel — fundraising will work to reduce the hurdle; Celebration '90 can be an affordable event.

The first event to kick-off the Boston Sports Committee's campaign to Vancouver will be at Fritz, Tuesday, Nov. 22nd (more details soon).

Come meet fellow athletes and artists. Bring your energy and ideas to make our goal achievable. Come share the vision of Celebration '90.

Be part of the team by writing: Boston Sports Committee, c/o Metropolitan Health Club, P.O. Box 329, Boston, MA, 02117, or call 536-3006 between 9am and noon.

Sincerely,
Jeffry Pike
Cambridge, Mass.

If the Krishnas can do it...

Dear *GCN*:

I am an occasional writer to you all and just need to get some issues to you of Importance. I am in the proceedings of taking the West Virginia Penitentiary to federal court to where they have violated my rights very severely. For one it's all because I am Gay or Bisexual or whatever it is. I as well as two other straight inmates who have been trying to help me and are being put through a lot of mental harassment and stress.

The prison here thinks they can shut us up by threats of violence, write-ups [disciplinary reports, which often lead to isolation and extension of prison time to be served], and the works. You name it, it's being done. We need the public to know about us and our situation. OK, the Krishnas, I don't know if you've heard of them, but they own a good bit of property in Moundsville and they got outside the prison and demonstrated because one of theirs was being treated unfairly. After all of that happened, he was finally treated good and got his religious rights as he'd asked for.

Now I don't expect anything like that to happen for me but I do wish for my brothers and sisters out there to write a letter of protest to help inmates, for example by telling the warden [Warden, West Virginia Penitentiary, Moundsville WV 26041] to have his guards keep their personal prejudices out of the system and let the prisoners do their time without all of the above-mentioned harassment.

Another thing that they do here is mess with the flow of mail coming in, which is one of the things I'm taking them to federal court for.

Any of you interested in more information on being helpful in this can contact me. Thanks for the books and the legal materials [overview of prisoners rights]. They were a big help.

Your brother,
Robert O. Byrd
50181
818 Jefferson Ave.
Moundsville, WV 26041

GCN: Commitment to community

Beyond almost all expectations, 1988 is proving to be a dynamic year, bustling with activity in local lesbian and gay communities and for *GCN*. The March on Washington is one year behind us, but all the grassroots organizing work following on its coattails is still growing in scope and power. AIDS has finally settled into our consciousness as well as our lives; no one in the community is left unaffected. And more than ever we see a spirit moving lesbians and gay men across the country to put aside their differences and to fight their separate struggles together.

In the midst of this year of political resurgence, *GCN* is celebrating its birthday. As we celebrate the excitement of the present and near future, we're also looking at our past as well. In June 1973, several gay men and lesbians gathered together at the old Charles Street Meeting House and decided that Boston needed a newsletter for the newly emerging gay movement. What started out as a two-page mimeographed handout quickly became a four-page offset print tabloid and continues now as the oldest gay and lesbian weekly that covers both lesbian and gay male concerns. *GCN* has grown and survived only through widespread community support; we think that our 15th anniversary is the time for *GCN* to reaffirm its commitment to all of the lesbian and gay community.

At its inception, *GCN* saw itself as a paper for the whole community. Throughout its early years the paper's membership put together a "Statement of Principles" to guide its content and general operations. We believe that it is time to reaffirm this "Statement" and to bring the paper closer to its original mission as a resource for the whole community.

One of the first "principles" states:

GCN is a community newspaper. This means that it is not the organ of a person, business or movement party. It is...free of any ties except those of the responsibility of journalism. It is a community newspaper because it serves a section of the population which can be identified as an entity, part of but separate from the rest of the population.

We also try to construct a gay sensibility by presenting as many of the various kinds of opinions and feelings of the various sections of the gay community as possible.

The gay community is so varied that it seems, at times, impossible to characterize it all. Gay people come from all economic, educational, political and social backgrounds. Therefore, the newspaper feels a responsibility...to cover as many of the different factions as possible, and to educate the general public that these differences of opinion exist within the community, are tolerated or not, but are aired.

While most gay/lesbian papers have focused on relatively restricted coverage of "gay culture," legal gains and social life, *GCN* has committed itself to direct, concrete action on this policy of inclusivity. People of color; feminist issues; boy lovers; people of various class backgrounds; and issues of sexuality such as s/m, pornography and incest survival have all been included in *GCN*'s coverage while other gay publications have defined them as "fringe" or "too controversial." *GCN*'s stated commitments, and the thousands of articles produced under it, comprise a historic and unparalleled vision of what our community can be. The original *GCN* members were quite specific in how this community voice should work, and they understood that problems would arise.

One of *GCN*'s most pressing problems has been to meet the needs of a varied community in which not all factions are liked or respected by others. At the same time we wish to maintain our image as the voice of the entire community. We try to maintain a respect for all the varying lifestyles and politics within the gay world because they exist; but keep our right to editorialize against any segment we feel to be preaching intolerance, violence or racism, sexism or ageism.

Realizing that this type of political commitment needs to be made practical on an everyday level at the paper, they wrote:

Some if not all of the staff tends to be politically active on the radical end of the spectrum, so we need to make a conscious effort to remember that our readers may not be of the same mind, and that *GCN* is not to be an extension of our own "egos," a "right-on" newspaper.

To ensure that this happened they added another proviso:

Since work at *GCN* requires more political compromise than work at other publications, we here warn staff and prospective staff that if they cannot make compromises, that they should channel their energies in other directions rather than try to change the purpose of *GCN*.

Later, it became clear that *GCN* needed to make more explicit commitments to specific areas of concern. In 1983 we enacted an anti-racism plan that mandated outreach and inclusion of people and communities of color in the coverage and paid and volunteer staffing of the paper. Also the entire membership made a firm commitment to deal with feminist issues in the operation of *GCN*. In short, this outreach made important elaboration on the inclusionary intent of *GCN*'s Statement of Principles. Together, these statements are the paper's standing definition of its mission.

Over the years controversies have raged at *GCN* on everything from a letters-to-the-editor policy to the use of charge cards. One of the debates that has surfaced recently is how the staff and board conceive of the paper's actual and projected readership. An increasingly moralistic, political tone around the paper has led some to see the paper's audience as "progressives" and "leftists," the "converted" in terms of radical politics.

Such thinking is a disservice to the goals of the paper. If we are going to promote the original principles of inclusivity and dialogue, it is vital to realize the distinction between advocating these principles to the largest audience possible and assuming that all of our readers share a sophisticated understanding and activist's commitment to these goals. Unlike the enunciation of specific political principles, the formation of communities is a diffuse, ongoing process which depends on the broad coalition-building and self-awareness which are envisioned in the *GCN* Statement of Principles.

One recent result of this loss of touch with the paper's intended readership is the need for the recent staff editorial about the deplorable lack of comprehensive AIDS coverage. By focusing on a narrow definition of who constitutes the "gay community" some staff and volunteers minimized the pressing concern of a large segment of our readership. Ironically this led us to neglect a disease that cuts across political, color, and class lines in the most devastating way imaginable. Again, the "Statement of Principles" contains advice on how the paper should have approached this kind of problem:

One pitfall in the movement approach to journalism is to see all issues as political and to overlook the human component of the political. We believe that it is impossible to separate the personal from the political, that gay is a personal lifestyle choice that affects one's political choices. *GCN* strives to see our readers as real people, to search out the human side of news and features. Also, this approach, we hope, will fill people's needs to see themselves as part of a totally political world. We also believe that the personal story cuts across ideological lines and speaks to all persons.

But in attempting to be broad and inclusive, *GCN* must avoid the pitfalls of being politically diffuse and ineffectual. In this essay, we want to reassert the notion that people and communities — all people and all kinds of communities — are capable of making responsible decisions if they are given both information and respect. The "gay and lesbian community" is made up of all kinds of ideas, identities, colors, experiences and beliefs. As lesbians and gay men, we all deserve not only a voice in our oldest community paper, but also the right to be heard. As the "Statement of Principles" says:

GCN readers, we feel, do not have to be told that their beliefs are right or wrong, logical or illogical. They need to be given the information to make up their own minds on questions of interest to the gay community.

All signatories are *GCN* members. The *GCN* membership is comprised of current and past staff, volunteers and members of the Board of Directors.

Paul Amato
Warren Blumenfeld •
Walter Borawski
Janna Bremer
Michael Bronski
Chris Bull •
Richard Burns •✓
Gerry Cabrera ✓
Kevin Cathcart ✓
Art Cohen ✓
Steve Dyer ✓
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Tim Grant
Amy Groves ✓
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Cindy Patton •✓
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Eric Rofcs •✓
Harry Sang •✓
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Paul Schierenbeck
Charley Shively
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GCN Job Opening Promotions/Classified Advertising Coordinator

Use direct mail marketing, exchange advertising, free distribution, renewal campaigns, and other strategies to increase subscription and newsstand sales of the paper. Log and process weekly classified advertising. Participate in weekly workings of *GCN*, including staff meetings, collaborating on editorials, etc.

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All GCN positions require a commitment to lesbian/gay liberation, feminism, anti-racism, an awareness of class issues, and a commitment to collective decision making.

Salary/Benefits: All positions pay \$200/week and include eligibility for ADW Workers Trust health/life insurance, routine health care through Fenway Community Health Center, paid sick leave and four weeks annual paid vacation. *GCN* offers staff members responsibility for their own jobs with flexibility and ample room for innovation.

To apply: please send resume and cover letter by Dec. 15 to *GCN* Job Search Committee, 62 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116. Lesbians and gay men of color are particularly encouraged to apply.

DANCE PARTY!

Saturday, December 10, 1988
9pm-2am

That's right, another happening dance party (have you recovered from our Halloween bash yet?) with a live d.j., the hippest dance tunes, a cash bar, and totally groovy people...and this time it's a benefit for **Gay Community News** and **Radical America**, to be held at Villa Victoria Cultural Center, 85 West Newton St., in Boston's South End.

Tickets are available at *GCN*, Cambridge Food Coop, Arborway Video & Sound, Red Book, Glad Day Bookshop and Central American Solidarity Association for \$6-\$10 (sliding scale).

Villa Victoria is wheelchair accessible.

Pro-choice is pro-fun

Standing up for abortion rights, sitting down for breakfast

By Nancy De Luca

BOSTON — Usually political commitment requires sacrifice, lots of hard work and suffering the outrage of those who disagree with you. The pro-choice movement is no exception, with recent attacks from the right threatening every woman's right to a safe, affordable abortion. The lining of Beacon Street with pro-choice demonstrators on Sunday, Oct. 29 was a notable exception to the hostility the issue of abortion frequently engenders.

The extensive planning by organizers of the action was evidenced by the piles of signs and street corners crowded by women warming their hands on cups of coffee as my buddy Liz and I approached Beacon Street about a half-hour before things were

repeatedly shouting messages of support. The mood along the line was spirited and social, with the friendliness of our reception making for a playful atmosphere. I can recall only a few hostile responses as we waved our signs and banners. There was one encounter between a sign-carrying pro-lifer (the only one I saw with a sign) and me. He told me that I would have no need for abortion if I could only "curb my lust." The idea caught my imagination, but I didn't quite know how to explain that with winter coming on, my lust is barely housebroken.

The likelihood of any further direct confrontation with the opposition became even more remote as word spread that the "Operation Rescue" folks who had been threatening



Pro-choice demonstrators line Beacon St. in Boston on Oct. 29 scheduled to get underway. Having just had a substantial breakfast of blintzes and bagels, Liz and I strategically positioned ourselves across from Haim's Deli among the ranks of those carrying "Stand Up For Choice" signs at Coolidge Corner. As other demonstrators straggled in after us, another "Late Riser for Choice" comment could be heard from those who had been there on time.

Instead of the usual offensive verbal and sometimes physical abuse which the pro-life movement has recently become noted for, Brookline residents and passers-by were extremely supportive of our early morning activism, and showed their appreciation by honking their horns and giving us the thumbs up sign. Wives leaned across husbands and husbands leaned across wives to seize control of the horn; kids in the back seat urged parents to honk one more time; cyclists whizzed by with pro-choice signs taped to their backs; and several cars were seen "cruising the strip" and driving by,

ing to blockade an abortion clinic in Boston or Brookline had instead gone to Providence, Rhode Island. After the scheduled two hours of "standing up for choice" on Beacon Street, Liz and I made our way to a rally at Cleveland Circle, checking out the other demonstrators en route. What impressed me the most about the crowd — which included many men — was the number of women in their late teens and early twenties who had turned out for this demonstration. With all the current talk of apathy and the "death" of the feminist movement — due in part to the coming of age of a generation that has never experienced life pre-legal-abortion and pre-pill — it was inspiring to see such support.

Many of my friends who had participated in the demonstration and who had clearly enjoyed the laid-back social aspects of the action later ridiculed the idea of being visibly pro-choice in such a supportive environment. I'm not sure that political commitment and suffering need always go together. I think there's nothing wrong with having a good time while visibly supporting an important political cause. In fact, late next spring I hope to see the Jamaicaway or the Fenway lined with demonstrators of all persuasions there to "Lie Down for Lust." □

Elizabeth Ramos, 33, dies of AIDS

By Mike Riegler

BOSTON — Elizabeth Ramos, an AIDS educator and the winner of a landmark AIDS-related malpractice suit in Massachusetts, died of AIDS on Nov. 4. Paul Collier, a friend of Ramos and a lawyer in the case, told the *Boston Globe* that "while the legal fight was important to her personally, it was her efforts against AIDS that were the most

important activities to her in the last days of her life."

Ramos attended conferences and gave talks focusing attention on AIDS in the Latino community, and she also gave presentations in high schools and grade schools on the importance of young people's being aware of the disease and of not being prejudiced against people who have it.

In January Ramos won a malpractice suit against Dr. Kenneth Bernstein of Harvard Community Health Plan. In the suit she argued that she was permanently debilitated due to Bernstein's failure to diagnose her pneumocystis pneumonia. At the time of the decision, Ramos' attorney, Deborah McCutcheon told *GCN*, "Hopefully this verdict will send a message to the medical community that they're not going to get away with prejudice against people with AIDS." □

JOHN GRAVES

Ph.D.

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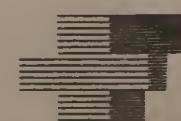
The Fenway Community Health Center, with the assistance of the Boston Department of Health and Hospitals, is launching Phase II of an ongoing federally-funded study of sexual transmission of HIV among gay and bisexual men.

We are currently enrolling sexual partners, one of whom is HIV-antibody positive and one of whom is HIV-antibody negative.

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HOMEROS-Lambda founding members Peter Ambrus, Lajos Romsauer and Ferenc Sebestyen

First 'official' Hungarian gay group launched

Group appeals to government by stressing need for AIDS prevention measures

By Richard Steinman and Donald J. Catalano

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Long efforts by gay men and lesbians in Hungary to organize without fear of government condemnation were met with success this spring, resulting in the first officially sanctioned gay/lesbian organization in an Eastern Bloc Country. With the approval of the government of the Hungarian People's Republic, the "founding assembly" of HOMEROS-Lambda — now officially registered as a "national organization" — was attended by over 100 people on May 8, 1988 at the Reggae Hotel in Budapest. The Hungarian government was represented at the meeting by its Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (MHSA) and on May 8 and 9 the event was prominently featured in

received the proposal in a more open-minded way but took no definitive action. So the gay leadership employed the tactic of discreetly tipping off a progressive television journalist who pressed the minister for action on the long-pending proposal. In fact, the journalist delivered an ultimatum of sorts: either act upon the proposal within three days or the long-standing inaction by MHSA would be reported by the media.

Csehak lost no time in acting but demonstrated her political acumen. Instead of taking the decision on her own, she "kicked it upstairs" to the Council of Ministers (Cabinet) — of which she was the newest member — and asked them to take the final action on the proposal. They approved, and in doing so inadvertently made HOMEROS-Lambda the only national organization officially sanctioned by the Cabinet itself.

Voluntary organizations in Eastern Bloc countries are illegal unless publicly sanctioned, or unless they operate as a wing of an organization so recognized. For example, in the German Democratic Republic — East Germany — three gay and lesbian groups function under the auspices of the National Youth Movement or the Evangelical Church. And the infant gay organization in Prague, Czechoslovakia, operates under the protective arm of the Institute of Sexology.

"First step toward peace and joy"

The "founding assembly" was highlighted by a keynote address and greetings from the Co-Secretary General of the International Lesbian/Gay Association (ILGA), Jean-Claude Letist. As this was the first official meeting, the assembly also took care of organizational matters including the registration of 87 members, election of leaders, acceptance of proposed bylaws, and the introduction and remarks of each of the officers. To close the meeting, upcoming events were announced and a plea was made for everyone present to recruit additional members. "We consider each member as an activist who is to bring more people and spread information," said Andrea Doory, the group's vice chair. "The more we are, the less vulnerable we are."

Peter Ambrus, the sociologist who initiated the organization, was elected General Secretary. In his keynote address, and in the brief remarks of the newly elected officers, the following points were emphasized:

• Laying the groundwork for the organization was not easy. While there has been a kind of tolerance toward homosexuality in Hungarian society, this tolerance was seriously eroded by the advent of AIDS.

• Both the government and the founders of HOMEROS share two main objectives: to fight against AIDS, and to make homosexuals' personalities more complete by their being able to openly claim their individual identity and have a group identity as well.

• Amidst Hungary's current economic and political turbulence, approval of an independent national organization for homosexuals has become one of the cardinal

Continued on page 12

The Rent-a-Yentas know all, see all, and tell all in...

Was it a date?

By Fanny Fermisch and Tess Fertummelt

Don't believe those people who would have you think yentas are busybodies, bored women whose sole joy in life is to pry into the affairs of their innocent neighbors. Oy, such bubbemeises! (If you don't know a bubbemeise from a hole in the ground, see the glossary at the end of the article.) Selfless concern for our sisters, that's what motivates us. That and that alone! How many times have you sat in a woman's cafe or bookstore overhearing some horrendous situation or another, and felt unable to aid a sister with a problem? You wished there was someone to turn to, didn't you? Well, now there is — because of our commitment to our community, we are taking on the responsibility of helping everyone sort things out.

Let's begin with a particularly burning question that never seems to get resolved: dating. Women often get together, spend an afternoon schmoozing, go their separate ways, and are left wondering that age old question, "Was it a date?" Such confusion you need like a hole in the head!

The Rent-a-Yentas, major machers in the lesbian community that we are, mentioned our willingness to help out to one person and were instantly inundated with five sack-loads of mail. This we also needed like a hole in the head. But like nice Jewish girls, we read through all of these calls of distress. Of course, so much mail we got, we can't respond to it all in print. We had to edit down to a few letters reflecting common concerns about dating and lack thereof.

Dear Rent-a-Yentas,

I'm so confused I don't know what to do. How can I explain it? We've known each other five years, and one afternoon after a quick stroll around Jamaica Pond, we parted ways with a kiss. I was overcome with the most extreme case of confusion I have ever felt in my ten years as a lesbian. Was it a date?

Signed,

Sleepless in Jamaica Plain, Mass.

Dear Sleepless

Sorry we've taken so long to get back to you, but, what with the five sack-loads of mail, it took us ages to sort through, find, and then reply to your compelling story. Kineahora, it should not happen again. By now, you and your friend (what's her

name?) are either happily new-found lovers, you've already done "it" and have broken up, or, a third possibility, you haven't slept in two and a half months awaiting our reply. If this is the case, it should, by this stage, be extremely easy to find out if it "was a date." If it was a date, your girlfriend will also have been sleepless for these past months, wondering the same thing. You'll know by her incessant yawning and the zombie-like look in her eyes. The yentas recommend you make your move, take her to bed, and then get some sleep.

Dear Rent-a-Yentas,

I set up an appointment to have my brakes adjusted at the Women's Bike Collective, and on the morning of the appointment, I found myself polishing my old clunker. Within 15 minutes, I had managed to remove four years of built-up grease from my chain and freewheel. I was sweaty-palmed as I wheeled my bike into the shop. There stood Annette, tire iron behind her ear, waiting to fill out the oaktag work order. She offered to teach me the ins and outs of bicycle maintenance on her own time. We're seeing each other again, and I went out and bought two cans of WD-40. Is it a date?

Signed,

Well-lubed in Lincoln, Neb.

Dear Well-lubed,

Chances are Annette is going out of her way to work on your bike because she has other things on her mind. Just as you have knocked yourself out in preparing your trusty Schwinn for her capable hands, she too has probably made special preparations for your time together. If you're afraid of making a total fool of yourself, look for the following telltale signs when she first arrives: Is her workshirt freshly laundered and ironed? (Or more telling, has she inexplicably left her toolbox at the shop?) Is she planning on doing an entire overhaul when simple adjustments would suffice? These signs will be your clue to let your fingers intertwine as you pass her the crescent wrench and then let nature take its course.

Dear Rent-a-Yentas,

Let's say you went out with this girl you thought was the cutest person on the face of the earth. Let's say you also think she has a

girlfriend, but you're really not sure. And let's say you try and test the waters by making some mention of this possible girlfriend, but the cutest girl on the face of the earth says that she rarely sees this possible girlfriend, and anyway, the possible girlfriend is off studying French in Paris for six weeks. Let's say that all other sources of information on the subject are either misinformed or are too close to the cutest girl to be trusted.

Let's say on your second time together, the cutest girl on the face of the earth asks you how you would feel about sleeping in the same bed with a cat, and she happens to have two of them. Let's say you were too nervous to pursue the true meaning of this question and were left in a complete quandary. Do you think she was trying to find a home for an upcoming litter of kittens, or was she coming on to me? I have to know, was it a date?

Signed,

Confused in Boise, Idaho

Dear Confused,

Remember the Yentas' first dating rule of thumb: if you think it might have been a date, then it probably was. In fact, from the sound of your letter, we have a feeling you've gone beyond the "was-it-a-date" stage by now and should probably send us an update for our next column, "Is it a fling, a relationship, or an affair?" But whatever it is, the Rent-a-Yentas ask you to think to yourself, do you need this kind of mishegoss in your life?

Note: For those of you involved in romantic entanglements of any longevity, we will attempt, in our third column, to answer that most nagging question, "Is it over yet?" So, kinderlach, stay tuned, and feel free to send us your true life stories and questions. Address mail to Rent-a-Yentas, c/o GCN Features, 62 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116.

Glossary of Yiddish words:

Bubbemeises: lies

Kibbitzing: A cross between gossiping and commiserating

Kinderlach: a diminutive for "children" (as if they need one!)

Kineahora: literally, "keep the evil eye away" — substituted for "God forbid" in less-assimilated conversations

Machers: movers and shakers

Mishegoss: literally, insanity or madness; figuratively, insanity or madness

Yentas: experts on all social matters, both trivial and vital to their community — see also Fanny Fermisch and Tess Fertummelt

□

A feast of crafts and culture by women

Celebrating the eighth annual Women's Craft Market in Boston

Eighth Annual Women's Craft Market. Nov. 26 at the Cambridge, Mass. YWCA (wheelchair accessible space) and the first three weekends in December at 186 Hampshire St. (non-accessible), Cambridge, Mass. (See this week's and upcoming calendar listings for complete information.)

By Vickie Stamps

Welcome to year eight of the Women's Craft Market — a kaleidoscope of pot-bellied goddesses, beaded bangles and earrings, herb-cramped healing bags, clothing and buttons. The 43 women who make up the market, ranging from novitiates to seasoned saleswomen and including a number of women of color, come from as far away as New York or as close as Cambridge, Mass. Ordinarily presenting their work only in the basement of New Words bookstore, this year's festival opens at the Cambridge YWCA, which makes at least one day of the event wheelchair accessible.

The craftswomen's work is part of "creating culture from the energy and creativity of women" says art market co-organizer Jo Schreiber, as well as a way for women to stop underselling themselves. She says, "With support and safety, we become more confident...this is healing work and what keeps me sane." Another crafts-woman, who goes by the name Rocky Road, says, "Our works are wonderful and we should be matronized to the hilt."

Matronizing the Craft Market shouldn't be a problem. Whether it's "Leather Lover" t-shirts or mobiles of nude dykes with purple labias, this bazaar will sweetly weasel that last sawbuck from your jeans. And the anachronistically low prices will convince you that you're richer than what that blasted automatic teller tells.

Among the wonderful wares are the painted desert and somber earth tone garments of Latina clothier and Craft Market co-organizer Juanita Colon. Her business, Styling for Change, began with stage clothes designs for Casselberry/Dupree. With the addition of Juanita's magnificent cloth bags, her clients now include folks such as Odetta and Alice Walker. Very popular are her kiki pons, Puerto Rican slang for take off/put ons. These baggy balloon pants just drip with color.

Juanita sees her work as part of her cultural heritage. "My mom lived in Puerto Rico and used to sew white linen jackets and

underclothes for men. I never thought I'd do this, you know, sew. In fact, I resisted it because of the stereotype of factory work. But I realized it's not about that. How I work in fabrics reflects my culture, the colors, the flavor, the style."

Jewelry exhibitors Avion, Elynn Kroger and Rocky Road show the finest of crafts-work and design. Avion and Kroger sell unique pins slashed into giant, geometric and multi-metal settings, with strong New Wave Japanese leanings. Kroger calls her brooches "an exercise in conflicting textures and materials." At the most recent Craft Market showing — in May of this year — Rocky Road's work included a pearl of an amethyst delicately twisted into a silver ring setting. Any self-respecting drag queen would break stride for a look.

Lambdas, pink triangles and lesbian symbols on buttons, stickers and stamps are hawked by Braille advocate Dorothy Barenholtz. Badges denounce apartheid and the Contras, and bumper stickers testify that "witches heal." Profile pins of Harriet Tubman demand that "my people go free." Less traditional are Jo Schreiber's "Thought Woman Buttons" — masterfully painted, glittered and feathered.

A Laotian woman who works with her mother sells intricately embroidered panels and jackets. Full of deep sunset color, several squares capture traditional family designs of communities at work, at play or on mountainous treks.

Then there are the feminist housewares: creatively crafted fork breeze chimes, crooked fork earrings, Sancraft's nude "Purple Woman Erotica" decor and "gay bear" magnets.

Soothsaying and spiritual paraphernalia can be bartered for, and some vendors share their alchemic wisdom freely as you peruse their wares. Vaguely reminiscent of boardwalk palmists, an occasional Tarot card prophet or astrologer sits at a quiet table waiting for your future to wander by. Amulets, orbs and mystical wands are for sale, as are gems like Azurite and Black Tourmaline, both popular among some people with AIDS.

Don't miss your chance to see all these women's fine wares and more. It's a feast for the spirit.

For more information, write Women's Craft Market, Box 2353, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. □



Tess Fertummelt



Fanny Fermisch



Juanita Colon



PISD at the ACT NOW demo against the FDA, Oct. 11, Washington

Marilyn Humphries

fatigue syndrome/Epstein-Barr Virus is also an immune system disease. We were able to understand the position of a person who feels sick and is told "It's all in your head," and we are able to support our sisters/our friends.

I believe we offer a new vision of society, a new model for a movement for social change, for justice and equality. And the movement is based on our own lives. We are stretching ourselves to love others different from ourselves, but with a realization of a common humanity. We offer action — collective, difficult, but authentic action — in a society that has stolen power and meaning from all but the most privileged. When we act, we offer a new vision of what community is all about, and it's based in the nature of our loving impulses and our eroticism. Look at the NAMES Project Quilt, or better, look at the ads in the *San Francisco Sentinel*, where PWAs advertise in order to continue their sexual lives. These ads are a pioneering force for sexual liberation in the face of danger. We offer the erotic as a tool for the liberation of all people.

I want to talk about some of the challenges that face our movement. The principal one is the changing face of the AIDS epidemic. We hear from Stockholm the news that among gay white men, the epidemic has been contained. We still see more and more of our friends get sick, and we have to fight for them. But in terms of the rapid spread of infection, AIDS is switching to the Third World. Dr. Gallo knows: he told AIDS workers in Africa that he would test his Nobel-Prize-bid vaccine in Africa because safe-sex education had reduced the incidence of AIDS too much in the U.S., but in Africa he could count on unchecked epidemic disease. In Africa, there are 14,000 official cases of AIDS, but the World Health Organization estimates that the true number is more like 140,000.

Here in this country the fastest-growing AIDS statistics in communities of people of color — among Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, Mexicanos, Asians. And among the despised: iv drug users, the homeless, where health care and social services are non-existent. Black, Latino and Native

movement has been — for good reason — largely gay and white and male. We can retain our gay consciousness and expand to a global compassion: we can support the directions that people of color or women will develop for themselves. We can join together with others not on the basis of paternalistic sympathy, but of common suffering and common enemies. And we had better build solidarity, because AIDS has become a political weapon in the hands of real enemies who want to eliminate queers and people of color.

How do we move forward? We confront powerful forces that stand in our way — chief among them government agencies like the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the FDA. We are in a fight with drug companies that are squeezing our blood money, like Lyphomed and Burroughs-Wellcome. [Even if Dukakis had become president instead of the CIA-wimp, we would be facing neglect and inaction.] In fact, this government, which pays for death squads and torturers in other countries so as to ensure profits for U.S. business, needs a much more thorough-going change than any President can effect. Are we willing to go that far? Are we willing to go beyond the formalities of civil disobedience to achieve those changes?

We want to stop AIDS. There are whole populations we have to pay attention to and to work with — people with different abilities, the homeless, IV drug users, prisoners. This means we will have to step outside middle-class values and ideas of how to do things. And we have to keep up the fight against erotophobia and homophobia. The AIDS epidemic provides fuel for the right wing and those who listen to them. In Illinois, where I live, State Rep. Penny Pullen — one of Reagan's AIDS Commissioners — is a mainstay of the Phyllis Schlafly Eagle Forum. Pullen and others have just successfully passed a bill that destroys the confidentiality protections of the law for people "suspected" of having HIV infections. Now they can be tested against their will, even without their knowledge. AIDS has given strength to the right-wingers and they are killing lesbians and gay men.

The gay and lesbian freedom riders in

PISD Off and Fighting Back!

The keynote speech from the ACT NOW AIDS Teach-in in Washington asks how far we are willing to go to change things

By Ferd Eggan

The following is the keynote speech that was delivered at the ACT-NOW National AIDS Teach-In held in Washington, D.C. Oct. 8, 1988. Ferd Eggan is a member of the PISD (People with Immune System Disorders) Caucus of ACT-NOW.

This message is brought to you by all the ACT-NOW people who are PISD, and especially by Margie, Arawn, Terry, Mark, Mick and Pam. We speak — if it's not too presumptuous — for all the men and women with AIDS and other immune system diseases around the world, and with 50,000 others in mind who are no longer here. We live with the epidemic in our own flesh, and we wanted to begin this gathering with an awareness of the special urgency we feel. In a larger sense, all of us here are feeling the epidemic's impact on our lives.

Well, dear friends, ACT-NOW is gathered here to assess our movement. We're only a year old. But the AIDS movement is as old as the epidemic. This month marks the third anniversary of the SF AIDS/ARC Vigil, the first and longest continuous civil disobedience action around AIDS in the U.S. Three years ago PWAs chained themselves to the doors of the S.F. Federal Building and demanded humane treatment; the fact that they are still there indicates how much work lies ahead of us. We've been working together as ACT-NOW since the fateful and difficult "Educate, Agitate, Organize" meeting here in D.C. last October. ACT-NOW has a whole week of joint activities in April and May under our belts, and far too many phone calls to coordinate actions at the Conventions and this shindig here. We are back in D.C. because this country needs us, and because we want to learn from our successes and our failures and develop our unity to work together in the future.

We are one part of a huge movement around AIDS, a whole uprising brought about by abuse on top of pain. For those of us who are lesbians or gay men, this has all-too-often been the story of our lives — despised by a racist, anti-woman, anti-gay society, now we have to take on the burden of epidemic death and suffering. But we are strong. All of us, gay or not, are moving through our love and pain to take power over our lives — the power to act, to demand, to resist injustice.

Look at how far we have come. In eight years time, people with AIDS, staring at the face of death, have created a network of caring services around this country. We have developed underground, guerrilla clinics to provide information and treatments that the government has refused to even test — let alone make available for people in need. And we are seizing medicine and health care away from the doctors and the experts. The actions of this AIDS movement are a chal-

lenge to the whole system of health care in this country. We demand a profound change — we say that health care is for human needs, not for corporate profit. We are here in Washington, D.C. to carry that challenge to the centers of power in the Dept. of Health and Human Services and the FDA.

Our protest in the streets has already forced changes in government policy. We are the ones who forced the President to create an AIDS Commission, and we dogged them, made them take a human and progressive stand in the face of the callous and moralistic pronouncements of the President himself. PWAs and health workers forced the CDC to recognize ARC and extend disability coverage to PWARCs. We are the ones who made the FDA develop fast-track testing for AIDS drugs; now we are here to make them use the fast track.

There's something else we have done — we have helped to recreate the movement for lesbian and gay liberation. We have heard the puritanical criticisms that said the '70s were a death trip of rutting sexuality and alienation. But gay men's sexual networks in particular were the foundation to build the communities that care for each other now. Did you cry for joy at the glorious sight of all those dykes and fags at the March on Washington last year, all three-quarters of a million of us? It is an unfortunate fact that the March would never have been so large if it hadn't been for AIDS. After sorrow comes joy.

And we have learned in our movement as we struggled with each other over racism and sexism and different physical abilities. We are like other North Americans, and we have grown up in a system that has relegated Blacks, Latinos and immigrants to poverty and suffering, pushed women into submission. Our confrontation with illness and death has taught us a little humility about our own suffering, and helped us to expand our loving consciousness to reach out to other communities, to overcome prejudices and realize what we have in common. And I am proud of those struggles where we changed ourselves.

I am proudest that a caucus of People with Immune System Disorders came into existence. What happened was this: a lesbian who had been a leading part of the work on AIDS and the work of ACT-NOW asked what we as people with AIDS intended to do about the fact that she and many other women also suffer from immune system diseases. She urged us to see that her illness — chronic fatigue syndrome — was in need of investigation and that women were in need of the support from us that women, and lesbians in particular, have given to gay men with AIDS. So, the PISD caucus of ACT-NOW came into being — a group of mostly gay men who recognize that chronic

Marilyn Humphries

Arrested PISD member in police bus at FDA civil disobedience

American forces have labeled the AIDS epidemic genocide, just like the sterilization programs that eliminated whole generations. How is our movement going to adjust to these new facts?

And AIDS is now the number one killer of women aged 18-35 in New York City. Nearly 5000 women have been diagnosed in the U.S. and half of the people with AIDS in Africa and Asia are women. Women die faster when diagnosed, and are less able to tolerate AZT, the one drug the FDA has released. Can we permit AIDS among women to remain a silent epidemic, like breast cancer?

We have an opportunity for genuine human solidarity. But, that solidarity must be a struggle to create new values, not the expedient constituency politics of this society. We are not all the same and it is counterproductive to assume that differences don't matter in the face of AIDS. The whole course of AIDS-related illness is different among Africans, for example. Each community will develop its own ways of dealing with the epidemic. Up to now, our

Atlanta and New Orleans showed us that we have to protest not just AIDS discrimination, but also the anti-sodomy laws. Those die-ins and kiss-ins were important acts, just like the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and ACT UP demonstrations against gay bashing in New York City. We all know that AIDS is not a gay disease, but let's face it, in the minds of most people, that's how it is perceived and mostly gay men have died in this country. In the minds of most people all gay men and lesbians are considered sinister AIDS carriers and are targets for attack. So, it's more important than ever to reaffirm the rightness of our sexual desire. One of our lesbian AIDS activists introduced herself in one of those "let's go around the room and say something about ourselves" by saying she liked sex. Let's all take up those courageous words and keep remembering what speaks even louder.

We have to be clear about what we want. In October of last year we came up with a tentative program in the AIDS Action Continued on page 10

Court

Continued from page 1

stand," said Hiam.

Larry Kessler, executive director of the AIDS Action Committee said, "Peter Hiam was right. He advised that we hold the line on testing, knowing full well it would land us in court. We probably would have lost anyway. We would have lost with dignity instead of with this wimpy, wishy-washy policy that tried to please everyone."

State Secretary of Consumer Affairs Paula Gold disagreed. "The regulations were very well thought out. We had no choice but to negotiate with the insurance industry because all along we were unsure of the insurance commissioner's power. The SJC's ruling made it very clear that our power is limited. I thought we had reached a



Denise McWilliams

fair compromise — that's why I'm upset by the ruling," Gold told *GCN*. She said the state's insurance regulations were among the most comprehensive in the country.

Hiam said Gold has not been helpful in the struggle to regulate HIV antibody testing by the insurance industry. He said she made several public statements, quoted by the SJC in their decision, supporting testing in some instances.

McWilliams called on Gold and the Dukakis administration to push for strong regulations in the state legislature. "It's time for the administration to prove that its stated commitment to 'health care for all' is more than rhetoric by addressing these issues in the legislature." She added that the administration could probably muster enough support for this legislation if it lobbied hard for it. She said she was not sure the administration really supports such legislation.

Gold said she was unsure what steps the state would take to force the insurance industry to insure people who test HIV antibody positive. "We have to consult with many people to determine what the best approach is. We want to pass legislation, not just introduce it," said Gold. She said current Insurance Commissioner Roger Singer would continue to regulate HIV antibody testing as far as the SJC ruling allows. New regulations regarding informed consent and confidentiality will be forthcoming, she said.

Activists noted that many people now face a choice between living without insurance or risking the discrimination that could result from a positive HIV antibody test. McWilliams said "[And] it is not just HIV testing we are talking about. We are talking about people being denied insurance for all kinds of reasons. Recently there has been a proliferation of tests which claim to predict future illness, including cancer and heart disease. We are going to see large numbers of people unable to buy health insurance. No insurance means no health care." □

ACT UP/NY

Continued from page 3

assistant district attorney on staff. After granting the adjournment, Drager then issued bench warrants for the arrest of Steve Zabel and Steve Grendon, two defendants who were not present.

According to Dobbs, the actions of the prosecution seem to indicate they are looking for a way out of prosecuting the case. He speculated that assistant district attorneys are trying to convince their superiors that the case is in fact not viable. Dobbs said that privately, they have expressed no interest in continuing the prosecution, and a desire to

see the case dismissed. However, some of the defendants said they feel the DA's office might be trying to discourage those people who continue to be arrested by taking a hard line in this case, and trying to prosecute them.

Unless the case is dropped by the prosecution, dismissal of the charges against the fifteen at this point is unlikely. A previous motion to dismiss in the interests of justice made by Dobbs and Zirinsky has already been denied by another judge. Although the case is approaching a delay of almost nine months, dismissal for failure to prosecute is unlikely because of legal technicalities surrounding the application of time limits imposed on the prosecution process.

In past pre-trial court appearances, the charges against the other 96 defendants were dropped. The case was adjourned until Dec. 7 when it will come again before Drager. If convicted, the defendants face a maximum penalty of a \$1000 fine and six months in jail. The other defendants in the case are Ortez Alderson, Neil Broome, Richard Deagle, Jim Eigo, Mark Harrington, Bill Lent, David Mayer, Bill Monaghan, Timothy Powers, Russell Pritchard, Peter Staley, Charles Stimson, and Timothy Vance.

In other ACT UP/NY news, members voted on the future of ACT UP's financial status at the group's Nov. 14 meeting at New York's Lesbian and Gay Community Center. Citing unnecessary entanglement with an oppressive government and other political disadvantages that outweighed any financial rewards, the membership overwhelmingly rejected a proposal to incorporate ACT UP. In the ballot-cast vote, a related proposal to apply for tax-exempt status for the organization was similarly defeated. ACT UP/NY will remain an unincorporated association without any tax exempt status. The membership did, however, vote to allow ACT UP to file a tax return. □

PISD

Continued from page 9

Pledge. In the Pledge, we called for a broad movement "in solidarity with all people threatened by the AIDS crisis so that no one is abandoned." We recognized that the AIDS crisis disproportionately affects men and women of color, and called for massive funding; comprehensive, sex-positive education; and a free, nationalized health care system. We know the AIDS Action Pledge is not perfect, but it is a living document that we have deepened and made more effective. Our demands of Health and Human Services and the FDA show how we can work together and make our work sharp and effective.

But I need to point out one more enemy — and perhaps this is the most powerful of all — it is ourselves. For the sake of millions of people in this country and around the world, we have to learn from each other and build unity. Let's ACT-NOW with humility and respect, let's get to know and trust one another. Look around. We are the AIDS activists for better or worse, in sickness and in health. We, dear sisters and brothers, are the ones we have to rely on to take care of business.

One thing is clear — the government is not going to take care of us. Just as the PWAs themselves had to take control of the government's activities in education, prevention, services to people who are sick.

The fact, dear friends, is that AIDS has taught us how to live and how to be well — by fighting for what's right. It is our society that is truly sick — sick with oppression and exploitation. The government is not interested in helping us — they would prefer that we curl up and die. In the face of cruelty and injustice, it's right to rebel.

We all have to act, and act now. There is hope for this sick society — the healing power of our anger and love. Love does not mean being nice, it means seeing what's wrong and trying to change it. We've already accepted the part that can't be changed — the deaths of friends that we love. Now we want to change what we can. In the words of our brilliant and loving fanatics, Act Up! Fight Back! Fight AIDS!

All women and men who are living with AIDS and other immune system disorders can contact PISD c/o Ferd Eggan, 3536 N. Paulina, Chicago, IL 60657. □

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Hungary

Continued from page 7

signs of Hungary's efforts toward democratization and the expansion of human rights.

• Creation of the organization has won support amongst the intelligentsia. However, consistent with greatly intolerant Hungarian traditions, certain other strata of society have expressed disapproval, and this has been exacerbated by AIDS-phobia. But in Amrus' opinion, initial public anxiety has been sufficiently reduced.

• HOMEROS-Lambda is not intended to be an elite organization. On the contrary, one of its primary aims is to initiate the homosexual "masses" into the organization "in the long run." This goal is expressed in the organization's structure, which will be a network of somewhat autonomous clubs from all over the country — which has a population of 10.5 million.

• HOMEROS-Lambda intends to provide the framework for homosexuals to "pass their free time in security and in a civilized way." Hence, before the close of the assembly, a series of activities were announced: a shipboard disco on the Danube River — which runs through the heart of Budapest; the formation of an "interest group" focused on film (one of a number of such groups proposed), which will show its first film — *Saturday Night at the Ritz* — at a theater operated by a lesbian; and a disco at a lesbian-operated cafe that the group hopes will evolve into a gay/lesbian discotheque. In the words of General Secretary Amrus, "we want to show people that activities under HOMEROS' auspices have all the advantages of legality and security, and that joining us does not entail any drawbacks for them."

• By way of introducing Jean-Claude Letist, the Co-Secretary General of ILGA, Amrus said, "It is our intention to become a member of ILGA. Initial steps have been taken toward this, (i.e., seeking the approval of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs), and, theoretically, there is no obstacle."

ILGA's Letist is one of Europe's most forceful and eloquent gay leaders. He is a native of Belgium who, for a number of years, has lived and worked in Cologne, West Germany, where he is also a leading gay activist on the local scene. His remarks, delivered in French, were translated into Hungarian for the audience. He rejoiced in the precedent established both by HOMEROS' formation and its legitimization. Letist said ILGA's mission is to fight oppression around the world, and that all gay men and lesbians must fight heterosexist oppression and the oppression of other vulnerable groups. He urged those assembled to fight for the right to be different, which entailed fighting against sexism and racism, as well as homophobia. "To be an activist," he summed up, "is to be a conscious citizen who fights to ensure the rights of minorities."

Letist emphasized the importance of HOMEROS, and other lesbian/gay groups, as providing the "first step toward peace and joy — the opportunity to know each other."

Author's note: Readers are asked to keep in mind that quotations in this article were either delivered in a language not native to the speaker, or translated for her or him by someone who is not a professional interpreter. □

Breeding

Continued from page 3

mean that educational efforts on the part of the lesbian and gay community have been successful and that repressive measures by the government are unnecessary. The other study, "Sex activity in bathhouses in Los Angeles County: Implications for AIDS prevention education," found that the vast majority of bathhouse patrons practiced safer sex. The study also found that bathhouses were among the best places to educate gay men who have little contact with the lesbian and gay community. Both studies, said Winter, directly contradict the Health Department's position.

Asked about the studies, Bogner said they do not necessarily apply to porn theaters or to New York City. Winter responded, "So we get screwed on both ends. First [health commissioner] Joseph uses San Francisco data to meet his political agenda about the prevalence of HIV in New York at the same

time he discounts data when it might contradict his desire to shut down a porn theater. He should apply the San Francisco data across the board. But the point is that the department has put no money into research to find out what exactly the situation is in New York. What we need is empirical data not homophobia from the Department. Stephen Joseph should be embarrassed to use another city's data and Kinsey data from the 1940s."

A New York District Court Nov. 1 rejected an appeal by the theater's owner — The Maharlia Theater Corporation — to keep the establishment open. The owner argued that its first amendment right of free speech had been violated by the city. Porn videos, the owner argued, are constitutionally protected forms of expression. The judge in the case noted that although the showing of videos carries first amendment protections, "high risk" sexual activities do not. The judge ruled, however, that the theater could be reopened if the theater can present a plan to eliminate unsafe sex.

Wheatley said that courts currently are not likely to rule in favor of establishments catering to gay sex. He noted that a California Superior Court ruled in August that the County of Los Angeles acted properly in closing Mac's bathhouse. Lambda lawyers representing the bathhouse argued that closing the bathhouse would contribute to the spread of AIDS by preventing the dissemination of safer sex information.

AIDS has provided the government an excuse to launch an attack on gay male sexuality, said Wheatley. "It's a systematic move to force us back into the closet. All over the country adult bookstores are being threatened under the guise of AIDS prevention. Any visible sign of gay sexuality is being attacked." □

Rights bill

Continued from page 3

elected officials as well as members from the Greater Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance (GBL/GPA), the Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus (MGLPC), the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the Massachusetts League of Women Voters.

Sen. Michael Barrett (D-Cambridge), chief Senate supporter of the bill, told the gathering in front of the State House that he was confident about the breadth of support for the bill. Barrett said that Bay State residents are "carrying a tradition of at least 300 years of [standing up for the disenfranchised]." Later, Barrett told *GCN*, "Our attention is turning to 1989. We faced a tough situation in 1988, [but] we face a very strong positive situation in 1989."

David LaFontaine, a member of MGLPA and an organizer of the rally, urged activists and supporters to call Barrett and other key supporters of the bill — including Sens. Lois Pines (D-Newton), Sal Albano (D-Somerville), and Michael LoPresti (D-Boston) — and encourage them to use their influence to get the bill off the floor and into the Committee for the Third Reading. According to LaFontaine, "If we let up the pressure on them, they're going to let the bill slide because they're taking some heat for supporting it."

At present, 22 out of 40 state senators are on record supporting the bill, and bill supporters expect two more recently elected senators to sign on when they enter the Senate in January. A two-thirds vote — support from 27 senators — is required to call a bill out of the Committee for the Third Reading. □

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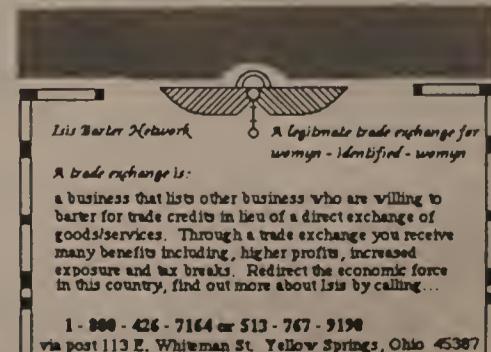
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I'm 34, Indian and Black, enjoy working with women with legal matters and helping out. I also enjoy trustworthy people and would like to write someone. [Prisoner Project: Gypsie has written a long and wonderful poem for a friend of hers with AIDS which we will publish in the next prisoner poetry spread.] Susan (Gypsie) BROWN, PO Box 9007, Framingham, MA 01701.

Very lonely Gay, Black Female seeking correspondence with another female. Looking for a very monogamous woman. I'm skilled in human resources and am very independent and I like my mate to be liberal and understanding. Linda DANIELS, B233788, Forest Hills Unit, Rogers Cottage, PO Box 7, Lowell FL 32663.

I would like to correspond with gay women from the free world. I'm 28, enjoy dancing and swimming and like meeting people. Color does not make a difference. Linda SOWELL, B-150433, Box 147 R&O C-1, Lowell FL 32663. Victoria, I just want you to know how proud I am to know you, and even more proud to love you. My life would be very drab without you. Love you baby, M.

PENPALS for PWAs, PWRCs, HIV

If you want to correspond with a prisoner or an outsider who is a PWA, PWRC or is HIV positive, please write the wonderful folks at PWA Coalition Newsline, 31 W. 26th St, New York, NY 10011. They will pair up insiders and outsiders. (They also publish one of the best PWA newsletters around. FREE to PWA, PWRC and HIV positive prisoners and others who cannot afford it. Check them out!)

New PWA — RAG!!!

A group known as PWA-RAG (Prisoners with AIDS—Rights Advocacy Group) has been started, as a result of the way prisoners (and their loved ones) are being treated, because of being PWAs, PWRCs, or HIV positive.

If you are a STATE prisoner and want to subscribe or contribute ideas, write James Magner, 38670-019, Box 34550, Memphis TN 38184. If you aren't allowed to write federal prisoners (FEDERAL prisoners can't write each other without special permission), write to James in care of GCN-PP, 62 Berkeley, Boston, MA 02116, BUT be sure to hide your prisoner identity deep down in the letter, so when it gets forwarded to James they won't know just be glancing at it that it's from a prisoner.

This may go very slowly, and it may not go at all, so be VERY patient, and don't get your EXPECTATIONS up too high (just your HOPES).



Young gay male into the arts, some sports, travel, meeting new people, wishes to correspond with other gay or bi males for friendship and possible more from the outside. Stephen POWELL, 153691, Rt 1 Box 207-C, Lawrenceville VA 23868.

Very interesting TS, loveable, looking for possible relationship. Due for parole in July '89, plan to relocate to CA but can go anywhere. Age and race unimportant. Sexy Black Studs welcome. Write 'Candi'. Yes, I'm very sweet! James FITZGERALD, 98743, PO Box 6, LaGrange, KY 40031.

27 yr old Greek Orthodox male looking to hear from transsexual queens and bisexuals of all races. Trying to establish life long friendship and possibly more. Most important a sincere love affair. Open-minded and hard working. Financially stable, please write and be real. Steven PAPPAS, 87A 9284, Box 149, Attica NY 14011.

calendar

26 Saturday **Chrystos**, Native American lesbian poet and author of **Not Vanishing**, reads at Red Book Store in Jamaica Plain. Info: 617/522-9435.



Please note: Calendar listings must be received by the Monday before the week of the event. Photos with listings are encouraged.

19 Saturday

Boston Tenth Anniversary celebration benefit for **Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)**. Swing dance with g/l band Cheek to Cheek. Metropolitan Health Club, 209 Columbus Ave. 9-midnight. \$15. Info: 617/426-1350.

Boston Chiltern Mountain Club's annual meeting. Workshops at noon, potluck supper and slideshow later. Info: Lisa 617/288-3141, Larry 617/275-1336.

Boston **Lesbian and Gay Neighbors of Jamaica Plain's Fall Ball**. Curtis Hall (the Municipal building). 9pm. Wheelchair accessible. Info: Rita, 617/522-3894.

Boston **Prime Timers**, an organization for older gay men, sponsors Jeff Epperly of Bay Windows on "The Gay Press." Lindemann Health Center, 25 Stanford St. 2-4pm. \$1. Info: Box 352, Reading, MA 01867.

Brookline Game Night at **Am Tikva**. Please bring something sweet. All welcome. Workmen's Circle, 1762 Beacon St. Green line T. 11:15am-1:30pm.

Cambridge **Boston Bisexual Women's/Men's Networks**' monthly dim sum brunch. Meet under the arch at Chinatown at 10:45 am, average cost \$6-8. Women and men welcome. Info: 617/247-6683.

Northampton S/M video and Social Night with **SHELIX**, a support group for Lesbians and Bisexual women. 8pm. \$2 donation. Info: 413/584-7616.

20 Sunday

Boston **Femme Core Space** presents the **Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Independent Video and Super 8 Festival**. 464 Harrison Ave. Noon (women only), 4pm (mixed audience). \$3-5. Advance reservations required; no wheelchair access. Tickets: 1-741-0790.

Cambridge **Alliance of Mass. Asian Lesbians and Gay Men** presents a video from CelebAsian '88 and AMALGM theater group activities. Paradise, 180 Mass. Ave. 2-5pm. \$2 donation. All welcome. Info: 617/288-7632.

Marblehead **The North Shore Gay and Lesbian Alliance** holds an annual plant sale. 90 Green St. 12-5pm.

Boston Contemporary and traditional Latin American music with **Flor de Cana**. 85 West Newton St. 8pm. \$9.50/\$11(door). Info: 617/492-1515.

Boston New group forming for **lesbian nurses**. Potluck at 6pm. Info: Dina, 617/497-7828.

Somerville **Bright Morning Star** will be in concert at the Somerville Theatre. 8pm. \$10.50, \$12. ASL interpretation. Info: 617/787-8000.

Cambridge **Hard-Hatted Women: Stories of Struggle and Success in the Trades**. Join editor Molly Maryin and local contributor Susan Eisenberg at New Words Bookstore, 186 Hampshire St. 3-5pm. Free and open to all. Info: 617/876-5310.

Lowell **Gay in the Merrimac Valley** potluck. Topic: alcohol and drug abuse in the gay community, with Jeff Sunshine. First Grace Fellowship Hall (Unitarian), 79 Florence Ave. 6-10pm. Info: David 508/452-4686.

21 Monday

Boston Thanksgiving Service with the **Greater Boston Lesbian and Gay Interfaith Coalition** at Arlington Church. Interdenominational. 7:30pm. Info: 617/734-3745.

22 Tuesday

Boston **Quilting Bee** for the **NAMES Project**. You don't have to sew, just come and be a part. Arlington St. Church. 6-9pm. Info: 617/451-9003.

23 Wednesday

Boston **Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth (BAGLY)** will hold a Thanksgiving potluck. 6pm arrival, 7:30 dinner. Info: 617/523-7363.

Boston General meeting for the **NAMES Project**. Next major event, World AIDS day, 12/1. Piemonte Room, Boston City Hall. 7pm. Info: 617/451-9003.

24 Thursday

Plymouth **An Afternoon in Solidarity with the Struggle of Native People**. Meet at the statue of Massasoit at Plymouth Harbor to observe the day of mourning with United American Indians of New England and their supporters. Noon. For more info, call All People's Congress, 617/424-1176.

25 Friday

Providence, RI **South East Gay and Lesbian (SEGAL) Country Dance Series**. Turkey trot dance. Bring a dessert. Body Lab, 568 S. Main St. 8-11pm. \$5. Info: Chris, 401/431-0822.

26 Saturday

Boston **SEGAL** Turkey trot dance. Bring a dessert. First Church of Jamaica Plain (Unitarian-Universalist) corner of Centre and Eliot Sts. 8-11pm. \$5. Info: Chris, 401/431-0822.

Boston **Boston Whole Health Expo** with 50 free seminars at the Park Plaza Hotel. 10-7:30. \$6, \$12/15 (workshops). Info: 413/586-4269.

Jamaica Plain **Chrystos**, Native American lesbian poet and author of "Not Vanishing" reads at Red Book Store, 92 Green St. 7:30pm. Info: 617/522-9435, 522-1464.

Cambridge **Women's Craft Market**. Cambridge YWCA, 7 Temple St. 11-5pm. Wheelchair accessible, free admission. Info: 617/894-9205.

27 Sunday

Boston **Whole Health Expo** 11am-7pm, see above listing.

28 Monday

Cambridge **Volunteer night at the Boston Bisexual Women's Network**. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7:30pm. Info: 617/247-6683.

29 Tuesday

Cambridge **Daughters of Bilitis** discuss Marge Piercy's "Gone to Soldiers." Old Camb. Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 8pm. \$1 donation. Info: 617/661-3633.

1 Thursday

Cambridge **New Directions for Men** sponsors a **Discussion Group for non-offending male sexual abuse survivors**. Topic: Family. Conference Room, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, 859 Mass. Ave. 8:30-10pm. Info: 617/498-9881.

Boston **The Boston Gay/ Lesbian Pride Committee** meets the 1st Thursday of every month. New members welcome. City Hall room 801. 7pm. Info: 232-1716.

Boston The Fenway Community Health Center, the Women's Center and the Boston Women's AIDS Project sponsor a **Drop-in night for women concerned about AIDS**. 93 Mass. Ave., 3rd floor. 7-9pm. Childcare and wheelchair. Info: 617/267-0900.

Cambridge Monogamy and alternatives will be this week's topic at **The Group**. All welcome. Info: 617/266-1129.

2 Friday

Cambridge The Boston premiere of **Leila and the Wolves**, a film about Arab women. Introduced by Palestinian actress Bushra Karaman. Bartos Theatre, Wiesner Building, 20 Ames St. (MIT). 7pm.

Cambridge Charley Shively speaks on **Josiah Warren: The First American Anarchist**. Black Rose Lecture Series. MIT room 9-150, 105 Mass. Ave, 8pm. Info: 617/524-0781.

Manchester, NH **New Hampshire Gay Parents** meet the first Friday of every month. 7:30pm. Info: 603/478-5437.

Weekly Events

Saturday

Boston **Living With AIDS Theatre Project** workshop to collect AIDS-related experiences and stories for theater music piece. No performance experience necessary. Club Cabaret, 209 Columbus Ave. 10:30am.

Boston **Boston Area Women's Self-Defense Collective** offers **Women's Self-Defense Classes** for women of all ages and abilities. Meets Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons in the South End. Info: 617/574-9433.

Boston **Gay Boston**, a cable program with Candace Van Auken. Boston Neighborhood Network, channels A3 and A8. 7:30-8pm.

Boston **Body Electric**: Healing with group sensual massage for gay and bisexual men meets at SSI Tremont St. \$12. Info: 617/522-9164.

Sunday

Boston **Metro Healing** presents **healing group** for everyone. Metropolitan Health Club aerobics room, 209 Columbus Ave. 7:30-9:30pm. Info: Boston's Healing Circle Hotline 617/426-9205.

Allston **Lesbian volleyball**. All skills welcome. Coached drills and scrimmage. Through November. West End House, 105 Allston St. 2:30-5:30pm. \$2. Info: Ann 617/524-4884.

Boston **"Boston's Other Voice,"** gay/lesbian radio with host Peter Stickel. 11/20, President of New England Gay and Lesbian Veterans Cliff Arnesen. 11/27, Johanne Blank and David Brillhart speak on the discussion forum known as "The Group" (see Thursday listings). WROR 98.5 FM. 11:30pm.

Boston **The Gay Dating Show** airs on WUNR 1600 AM. 11:45pm-3am.

Monday

Boston **Women's Rugby Club** fall practice every Monday and Wednesday, 6-8pm. No experience necessary. Info: Mel 617/536-4943, message 617/932-5401.

Cambridge **Lesbian Rap**. Topics: 11/21, Recovering from Rape. 11/28, Lesbians and Friendships. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8-10pm. Free. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

Tuesday

Boston **Lesbian and Gay Concert and Marching Band**. No auditions. YWCA, 120 Clarendon St. 7:15 p.m. Info: Joe 617/625-3304, Zoe 617/396-2989.

Providence, RI **ACT-UP/Rhode Island** has meetings open to the public. Rocket, 73 Richmond St. 7pm. ACT-UP/RI, PO Box 3156, Wayland Square Station, Providence, RI 02906. Info: Bill 617/782-9063.

Roxbury **ACT UP/Boston** meets to confront the AIDS crisis. Room 34S, Bldg. 3, Roxbury Community College. 7:30pm. Info: 617/49-ACT-UP.

Cambridge **Bisexual Women's Rap**. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7:30-10pm. Free. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

Wednesday

Cambridge **"Say it Sister!"** WMBR, 88.1 FM. 7-8pm.

Boston **Women's Self-Defense Classes** for women of all ages and abilities. See Saturday listing.

Cambridge **Lesbian Al-Anon** with childcare. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 6:30-8pm. Free. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

Brookline **Boston Committee Determined to Free Sharon Kowalski** meets. Boston Self-Help Center, 18 Williston Rd. 7pm. Info: 617/661-0533.

Cambridge **MASS ACT OUT** meeting. M.I.T., Building 66, Rm. 126. 7:30pm. Info: 617/661-7737.

Boston **Women's Rugby Club**. See Monday listing.

Friday

Worcester AIDS Project — Worcester support group meets for HIV positive, PWA's, PWARC's, lovers, friends, and the worried well. Open to all lesbians and gay men regardless of HIV status. 51 Jackson St. 7-9pm. Info: Dana S08/7SS-3773.

Boston **Healing group** for everyone. Santa Fe Hair Salon, S28 Tremont St. 7:30-9:30pm. Info: Boston's Healing Circle Hotline 617/426-9205.

Cambridge **Women's Coffeehouse** 11/25: Readings by Seattle Native American writer Chrystos. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8pm-midnight. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

Calendar compiled by
Erik Moore

Dorothy Elias

Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story. Directed by Todd Haynes. Written and produced by Haynes and Cynthia Schneider. Presented as part of the series "Exposures — Bringing the Body to Light" at the Boston Film/Video Foundation. Nov. 10, 11. (See calendar listings for other films in the series.)

By Elizabeth Pincus

Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story is a damnable captivating film, both grim and comical, a 43-minute whirlwind of macabre mockery and '70s sap. It's also mighty cocky, with those Barbie dolls bopping around in the lead roles while strains of Carpenter's breezy hits — "We've Only Just Begun," "Close to You," "Yesterday Once More" — serve as backdrop to the action. All of this seeming frivolity plays off against the deadly serious subject of the film. Superstar, after all, concerns the eating disorders that killed Carpenter in 1983, a decade after she topped the charts with mellifluous love songs that just begin to hint at the trouble lurking beneath her squeaky-clean veneer.

This audacious film by Todd Haynes, not to be confused with an upcoming TV-movie about Carpenter reportedly made with the cooperation of her brother Richard, is at once disarmingly simple and laden with complexities. The plot unfolds as a nearly straightforward historical docu-drama about Carpenter's life, complete with voice-over narration, but the images and the subtext attempt to tackle everything from body image to white, middle-class suburban idealism to post-World War II U.S. experience. By incorporating elements of tabloid sensationalism, sincere bio-epic and scathing political indictment — juxtaposed with the bland grotesquery of the Barbie dolls — Superstar uses schlock to condemn schlock culture. It works best when the odd-ball montage evokes a sharp nostalgia, when the throaty roar of Carpenter's voice contrasts achingly with the sad spectacle evolving on the screen.

Superstar met with critical raves when it premiered last year in New York and has since achieved notoriety on the

A Barbie doll's thin obsession

The captivating Karen Carpenter Story ultimately encourages voyeurism



Still from Superstar

underground art-house circuit. Haynes, a gay man who collaborated with Cynthia Schneider in making the film, has said he gained great sympathy and love for Karen Carpenter while working on the project. Indeed, on many levels Superstar embraces Carpenter, giving us a star's-eye view of the pressures of instant pop fame. Haynes seems to imply that Carpenter's anorexia and subsequent bulimia, which led to her

death at age 32 when she overdosed on the vomit-inducing drug ipecac, were the understandable results of a life in the limelight and a culture that encourages women's obsessions with their bodies. Haynes uses footage of concentration camp victims and other grisly images of physical abuse to draw parallels between the self-ravaging of women's bodies and fascist atrocities of political/cultural regimes.

But somehow, maybe because of the focus on Carpenter's celebrity status, Superstar fails to grasp the prevalence and immediacy of eating disorders as they affect myriad people, not just stars or celluloid images. The film comes off as distant, a bit too flip. Carpenter's anorexia, and perhaps the whole specter of woman as object and commodity, is seen as something quirky and rarefied, a fascinating manifestation of societal illness to be dissected from afar. The interspersed explanations of anorexia are terse and subjective, but presented wryly as fact. Despite its apparent attempt at ironic expose, Superstar ultimately reinforces the voyeuristic gaze of the camera which necessarily defines women as "other."

Still, this strikingly original film is chock full of grist for thought. And it manages to meld its semiological concerns with canny humor — no small accomplishment. Haynes' use of Barbie dolls, manipulated through stopped motion photography, is effectively chilling. Through the dolls' smooth perfection, he presents a synthetic version of nuclear family harmony, mirroring the glossy music of Karen and Richard Carpenter that heralded a return to the supposed wholesomeness of the early '70s. But as this artifice disintegrates, Haynes scrapes the flesh of Barbie/Karen Carpenter to reveal the harrowing experience beneath the facade.

Superstar contains other perks as well: a dishy reference to Richard Carpenter's possible gayness, a groovy party scene peopled with Dionne Warwick, Perry Ellis and Olivia Newton-John, some mock-pretentious talking head clips, and, of course, songs by Karen Carpenter. Compared to other '70s tunes that pepper the soundtrack — "Love Will Keep Us Together," "Alone Again, Naturally" — Carpenter's music sounds eerily beautiful and potent with meaning.

Paradoxically, a Barbie doll defies the norms of representation and suggests the dignity of Carpenter's contribution as a renegade musician, both drummer and lead singer. Such is the saving grace of this flawed film. □

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